

A DISCOURSE UPON THE POWER OF GOD.

Lo, these are parts of his ways : but how little a portion is heard of him ? but the thunder of his power who can understand ?—JOB XXVI. 14.

BILDAD had, in the foregoing chapter, entertained Job with a discourse of the dominion and power of God, and the purity of his righteousness, whence he argues an impossibility of the justification of man in his presence, who is no better than a worm. Job in this chapter acknowledges the greatness of God's power, and descants more largely upon it than Bildad had done, but doth preface it with a kind of ironical speech, as if he had not acted a friendly part, or spake little to the purpose or the matter in hand ; the subject of Job's discourse was the worldly happiness of the wicked, and the calamities of the godly. And Bildad reads him a lecture of the extent of God's dominion, the number of his armies, and the unspotted rectitude of his nature, in comparison of which the purest creatures are foul and crooked. Job therefore, from ver. 1 to ver. 4, taxeth him in a kind of scoffing manner, that he had not touched the point, but rambled from the subject in hand, and had not applied a salve proper to his sore : ver. 2, ' How hast thou helped him that is without power ? how savest thou the arm of him that hath no strength ? ' &c. Your discourse is so impertinent that it will neither strengthen a weak person nor instruct a simple one ;* but since Bildad would take up an argument of God's power, and discourse so short of it, Job would shew that he wanted not his instructions in that kind, and that he had more distinct conceptions of it than his antagonist had uttered ; and therefore, from ver. 5 to the end of the chapter, he doth magnificently treat of the power of God in several branches, and ver. 5 he begins with the lowest.

' Dead things are formed from under the waters, and the inhabitants thereof.' You read me a lecture of the power of God in the heavenly host ; indeed, it is visible there, yet of a larger extent, and monuments of it are found in the lower parts. What do you think of those dead things under the earth and waters, of the corn that dies, and by the moistening influences of the clouds springs up again with a numerous progeny and increase for the nourishment of man ? What do you think of those varieties of metals and minerals conceived in the bowels of the earth, those pearls and riches in the depths of the waters, midwived by this power of God ? Add to these

* Munster.

those more prodigious creatures in the sea, the inhabitants of the waters, with their vastness and variety, which are all the births of God's power, both in their first creation by his mighty voice, and their propagation by his cherishing providence.

Stop not here, but consider also that his power extends to hell, either the graves, the repositories of all the crumbled dust that hath yet been in the world (for so hell is sometimes taken in Scripture: ver. 6, 'Hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering'). The several lodgings of deceased men are known to him; no screen can obscure them from his sight, nor their dissolution be any bar to his power, when the time is come to compact those mouldered bodies to entertain again their departed souls, either for weal or woe. The grave, or 'hell,' the place of punishment, 'is naked before him;' as distinctly discerned by him as a naked body in all its lineaments by us, or a dissected body is in all its parts by a skilful eye. 'Destruction hath no covering;' none can free himself from the power of his hand. Every person in the bowels of hell, every person punished there, is known to him, and feels the power of his wrath.

From the lower parts of the world he ascends to the consideration of the power of God in the creation of heaven and earth: 'He stretches out the north over the empty places,' ver. 7; the north, or the north pole, over the air, which by the Greeks was called void or empty, because of the tenuity and thinness of that element; and he mentions here the north or north pole for the whole heaven, because it is more known and apparent than the southern pole.' 'And hangs the earth upon nothing;' the massy and weighty earth hangs like a thick globe in the midst of a thin air, that there is as much air on the one side of it as on the other. The heavens have no prop to sustain them in their height, and the earth hath no basis to support it in its place. The heavens are as if you saw a curtain stretched smooth in the air without any hand to hold it, and the earth is as if you saw a ball hanging in the air without any solid body to underprop it, or any line to hinder it from falling, both standing monuments of the omnipotence of God.

He then takes notice of his daily power in the clouds: 'He binds up the waters in his thick clouds, and the cloud is not rent under them,' ver 8. He compacts the waters together in clouds, and keeps them by his power in the air, against the force of their natural gravity and heaviness, till they are fit to flow down upon the earth, and perform his pleasure in the places for which he designs them: 'The cloud is not rent under them,' the thin air is not split asunder by the weight of the waters contained in the cloud above it. He causes them to distil by drops, and strains them as it were through a thin lawn, for the refreshment of the earth; and suffers them not to fall in the whole lump with a violent torrent, to waste the industry of man, and bring famine upon the world, by destroying the fruits of the earth. What a wonder would it be to see but one entire drop of water hang itself but one inch above the ground, unless it be a bubble, which is preserved by the air enclosed within it! What a wonder would it be to see a gallon of water contained in a thin cobweb as strongly as in a vessel of brass! Greater is the wonder of divine power in those thin bottles of heaven, as they are called, Job xxxviii. 37, and therefore called his clouds here, as being daily instances of his omnipotence. That the air should sustain those rolling vessels, as it should seem, weightier than itself; that the force of this mass of waters should not break so thin a prison, and hasten to its proper place, which is below the air; that they should be daily confined against their natural inclination, and held by so slight a chain; that there should be such a gradual and successive falling of them, as if the air were pierced with holes

like a gardener's watering-pot, and not fall in one entire body to drown or drench some parts of the earth : these are hourly miracles of divine power, as little regarded as clearly visible.

He proceeds : ver. 9, ' He holds back the face of his throne, and spreads the cloud upon it.' The clouds are designed as curtains to cover the heavens, as well as vessels to water the earth, Ps. cxlvii. 8 ; as a tapestry curtain between the heavens, the throne of God, Isa. lxvi. 1, and the earth his footstool. The heavens are called his throne, because his power doth most shine forth there, and magnificently declare the glory of God ; and the clouds are as a screen between the scorching heat of the sun, and the tender plants of the earth, and the weak bodies of men.

From hence he descends to the sea, and considers the divine power apparent in the bounding of it : ver. 10, ' He hath compassed the waters with bounds, till the day and night come to an end.' This is several times mentioned in Scripture as a signal mark of divine strength, Job xxxviii. 8, Prov. viii. 27. He hath measured a place for the sea, and struck the limits of it as with a compass, that it might not mount above the surface of the land, and ruin the ends of the earth's creation ; and this while day and night have their mutual turns, till he shall make an end of time by removing the measures of it. The bounds of the tumultuous sea are in many places as weak as the bottles of the upper waters ; the one is contained in thin air, and the other restrained by weak sands in many places, as well as by stubborn rocks in others ; that though it swells, foams, roars, and the waves encouraged and egged on by strong winds, come like mountains against the shore, they overflow it not, but humble themselves when they come near to those sands which are set as their lists and limits, and retire back to the womb that brought them forth, as if they were ashamed, and repented of their proud invasion. Or else it may be meant of the tides of the sea, and the stated time God hath set for its ebbing and flowing, till day and night come to an end ;* both that the fluid waters should contain themselves within due bounds, and keep their perpetual orderly motion, are amazing arguments of divine power.

He passes on to the consideration of the commotions in the air and earth, raised and stilled, by the power of God : ' The pillars of heaven tremble, and are astonished at his reproof.' By pillars of heaven are not meant angels, as some think, but either the air, called the pillars of heaven in regard to place, as it continues and knits together the parts of the world, as pillars do the upper and nether parts of a building. As the lowest parts of the earth are called the foundations of the earth, so the lowest parts of the heaven may be called the pillars of heaven.† Or else by that phrase may be meant mountains, which seem at a distance to touch the sky, as pillars do the top of a structure ; and so it may be spoken according to vulgar capacity, which imagines the heavens to be sustained by the two extreme parts of the earth as a convex body, or to be arched by pillars ; whence the Scripture, according to common apprehensions, mentions the ends of the earth, and the utmost parts of the heavens, though they have properly no end, as being round. The power of God is seen in those commotions in the air and earth, by thunders, lightnings, storms, earthquakes, which rack the air, and make the mountains and hills tremble, as servants before a frowning and rebuking master.

And as he makes motions in the earth and air, so is his power seen in their influences upon the sea : ' He judges the sea with his power, and by his understanding he smites through the proud,' ver. 12. At the creation

* Coccei in loc.

† Coccei.

he put the waters into several channels, and caused the dry land to appear barefaced for a habitation for man and beasts; or rather, he splits the sea by storms, as though he would make the bottom of the deep visible, and rakes up the sands to the surface of the waters, and marshals the waves into mountains and valleys. After that he 'smites through the proud,' that is, humbles the proud waves; and by allaying the storm, reduceth them to their former level. The power of God is visible as well in rebuking as in awakening the winds; he makes them sensible of his voice, and according to his pleasure exasperates or calms them. The striking through the proud here is not probably meant of the destruction of the Egyptian army; for some guess that Job died that year,* or about the time of the Israelites coming out of Egypt; so that this discourse here being in the time of his affliction, could not point at that which was done after his restoration to his temporal prosperity.

And now at last he sums up the power of God in the chiefest of his works above, and the greatest wonder of his works below: ver. 13, 'By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens; his hand hath formed the crooked serpent,' &c. The greater and lesser lights, sun, moon, and stars, the ornaments and furniture of heaven; and the whale, a prodigious monument of God's power, often mentioned in Scripture to this purpose, and in particular in this book of Job, chap. xli., and called by the same name of crooked serpent, Isa. xxvii. 1, where it is applied by way of metaphor to the king of Assyria or Egypt, or all oppressors of the church. Various interpretations there are of this crooked serpent: some understanding that constellation in heaven which astronomers call the dragon, some that combination of weaker stars which they call the galaxia, which winds about the heavens; but it is most probable that Job, drawing near to a conclusion of his discourse, joins the two greatest testimonies of God's power in the world, the highest heavens and the lowest leviathan, which is here called a bar serpent (as the word signifies in the Hebrew), in regard of his strength and hardness, as mighty men are called bars in Scripture: Jer. li. 30, 'Her bars are broken things.' And in regard of this power of God in the creation of this creature, it is particularly mentioned in the catalogue of God's works: Gen. i. 21, 'And God created great whales,' all the other creatures being put into one sum, and not particularly expressed.

And now he makes the use of this lecture in the text: 'Lo, those are parts of his ways; but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand?' This is but a small landscape of some of his works of power, the outsides and extremities of it; more glorious things are within his palaces. Though those things argue a stupendous power of the Creator in his works of creation and providence, yet they are nothing to what may be declared of his power. And what may be declared is nothing to what may be conceived; and what may be conceived, is nothing to what is above the conceptions of any creature. These are but little crumbs and fragments of that infinite power which is in his nature, like a drop in comparison of the mighty ocean; a hiss or whisper in comparison of a mighty voice of thunder.† This which I have spoken is but like a spark to the fiery region, a few lines by the by, a drop of speech.

'The thunder of his power.' Some understand it of thunder literally, for material thunder in the air. 'The thunder of his power,' that is, according to the Hebrew dialect, 'his powerful thunder.' This is not the sense; the nature of thunder in the air doth not so much exceed the capacity of human understanding, it is therefore rather to be understood metaphorically. 'The

* Drusius *in loc.*

† Œcolamp.

thunder of his power,' that is, the greatness and immensity of his power manifested in the magnificent miracles of nature, in the consideration whereof men are astonished, as if they had heard an unusual clap of thunder. So thunder is used, Job xxxix. 25, 'The thunder of the captains,' that is, strength and force of the captains of an army. And ver. 19, God, speaking to Job of a horse, saith, 'Hast thou clothed his neck with thunder?' that is, strength. And thunder being a mark of the power of God, some of the heathen have called God by the name of a thunderer.* As thunder pierceth the lowest places, and alters the state of things, so doth the power of God penetrate into all things whatsoever. 'The thunder of his power,' that is, the greatness of his power; as 'the strength of salvation,' Ps. xx. 6, that is, a mighty salvation.

'Who can understand?' Who is able to count all the monuments of his power? How doth this little which I have spoken of exceed the capacity of our understanding, and is rather the matter of our astonishment than the object of our comprehensive knowledge? The power of the greatest potentate or the mightiest creature is but of small extent; none but have their limits; it may be understood how far they can act, in what sphere their activity is bounded; but when I have spoken all of divine power that I can, when you have thought all that you can think of it, your souls will prompt you to conceive something more, beyond what I have spoken and what you have thought. His power shines in everything, and is beyond everything. There is infinitely more power lodged in his nature, not expressed to the world. The understanding of men and angels centered in one creature, would fall short of the perception of the infiniteness of it. All that can be comprehended of it are but little fringes of it, a small portion. No man ever discoursed, or can, of God's power according to the magnificence of it. No creature can conceive it; God himself only comprehends it, God himself is only able to express it. Man's power being limited, his line is too short to measure the incomprehensible omnipotence of God: 'The thunder of his power who can understand?' that is, none can.

The text is a lofty declaration of the divine power, with a particular note of attention, *Lo!*

1. In the expressions of it in the works of creation and providence: 'Lo, these are his ways.' Ways and works excelling any created strength, referring to the little summary of them he had made before.

2. In the insufficiency of these ways to measure his power: 'but how little a portion is heard of them!'

3. In the incomprehensibleness of it: 'the thunder of his power who can understand?'

Doct. Infinite and incomprehensible power pertains to the nature of God, and is expressed in part in his works; or, though there be a mighty expression of divine power in his works, yet an incomprehensible power pertains to his nature: 'the thunder of his power who can understand?'

His power glitters in all his works, as well as his wisdom: Ps. lxii. 11, 'Twice have I heard this, that power belongs unto God.' In the law and in the prophets, say some; but why power twice, and not mercy, which he speaks of in the following verse? He had heard of power twice, from the voice of creation and from the voice of government. Mercy was heard in

* The ancient Gauls worshipped him under the name of Taranis. The Greeks called Jupiter Βροταῖος; and Thor, whence our Thursday is derived, signifieth thunderer, a title the Germans gave their god; and Toran in the British language signifies thunder.—*Voss. Idolo. lib. ii. cap. xxxiii. Camb. Britan. p. 17.*

government after man's fall, not in creation ; innocent man was an object of God's goodness, not of his mercy, till he made himself miserable. * Power was expressed in both ; or, ' Twice have I heard that power belongs to God,' that is, it is a certain and undoubted truth, that power is essential to the divine nature. It is true, mercy is essential, justice is essential ; but power more apparently essential, because no acts of mercy, or justice, or wisdom can be exercised by him without power. The repetition of a thing confirms the certainty of it. Some observe that God is called Almighty seventy times in Scripture.* Though his power be evident in all his works, yet he hath a power beyond the expression of it in his works, which, as it is the glory of his nature, so it is the comfort of a believer ; to which purpose the apostle expresseth it by an excellent periphrasis for the honour of the divine nature, Eph. iii. 20, ' Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think, unto him be glory in the churches.' We have reason to acknowledge him almighty, who hath a power of acting above our power of understanding. Who could have imagined such a powerful operation in the propagation of the gospel and the conversion of the Gentiles, which the apostle seems to hint at in that place ? His power is expressed by ' horns in his hands,' Hab. iii. 4, because all the works of his hands are wrought with almighty strength. Power is also used as a name of God : Mark xiv. 62, ' The Son of man sitting on the right hand of power,' that is, at the right hand of God. God and power are so inseparable, that they are reciprocated. As his essence is immense, not to be confined in place ; as it is eternal, not to be measured by time ; so it is almighty, not to be limited in regard of action.

1. It is ingeniously illustrated by some by a unit.† All numbers depend upon it : it makes numbers by addition, multiplies them unexpressibly ; when one unit is removed from a number, how vastly doth it diminish it ! It gives perfection to all other numbers ; it receives perfection from none. If you add a unit before 100, how doth it multiply it to 1100. If you set a unit before twenty millions, it presently makes the number swell up to an hundred and twenty millions ; and so powerful is a unit by adding it to numbers, that it will infinitely enlarge them to such a vastness, that shall transcend the capacity of the best arithmetician to count them. By such a meditation as this, you may have some prospect of the power of that God who is only unity, the beginning of all things, as a unit is the beginning of all numbers ; and can perform as many things really as a unit can numerically, that is, can do as much in the making of creatures, as a unit can do in the multiplying of numbers. The omnipotence of God was scarce denied by any heathen that did not deny the being of a God, and that was Pliny, and that upon weak arguments.

2. Indeed, we cannot have a conception of God, if we conceive him not most powerful, as well as most wise. He is not a God that cannot do what he will, and perform all his pleasure. If we imagine him restrained in his power, we imagine him limited in his essence. As he hath an infinite knowledge to know what is possible, he cannot be without an infinite power to do what is possible. As he hath a will to resolve what he sees good, so he cannot want a power to effect what he sees good to decree. As the essence of a creature cannot be conceived without that activity that belongs to his nature ; as when you conceive fire, you cannot conceive it without a power of burning and warming, and when you conceive water, you cannot conceive it without a power of moistening and cleansing : so you cannot conceive an

* Lessius, de Perfect. Divin., lib. v. cap. 1.

† Fotherby, Atheomastic, p. 306, 307.

infinite essence without an infinite power of activity. And therefore a heathen could say, 'If you know God, you know he can do all things;' and therefore saith Austin, 'Give me not only a Christian, but a Jew; not only a Jew, but a heathen, that will deny God to be almighty.' A Jew, a heathen, may deny Christ to be omnipotent, but no heathen will deny God to be omnipotent, and no devil will deny either to be so. God cannot be conceived without some power, for then he must be conceived without action. Whose, then, are those products and effects of power which are visible to us in the world? to whom do they belong? who is the father of them? God cannot be conceived without a power suitable to his nature and essence. If we imagine him to be of an infinite essence, we must imagine him to be of an infinite power and strength.

In particular, I shall shew,

I. The nature of this power.

II. Reasons to prove that God must needs be powerful.

III. How his power appears: in creation, in government, in redemption.

IV. The use.

I. What this power is; or, the nature of it.

1. Power sometimes signifies authority, and a man is said to be mighty and powerful in regard of his dominion, and the right he hath to command multitudes of other persons to take his part; but power taken for strength, and power taken for authority, are distinct things, and may be separated from one another. Power may be without authority, as in successful invasions that have no just foundation. Authority may be without power, as in a just prince expelled by an unjust rebellion; the authority resides in him, though he be overpowered, and is destitute of strength to support and exercise that authority. The power of God is not to be understood of his authority and dominion, but his strength to act, and the word in the text (*גבורתו*, Sept. *σθένος*) properly signifies strength.

2. This power is divided ordinarily into absolute and ordinate. *Absolute*, is that power whereby God is able to do that which he will not do, but is possible to be done; *ordinate*, is that power whereby God doth that which he hath decreed to do, that is, which he hath ordained or appointed to be exercised;* which are not distinct powers, but one and the same power: his ordinate power is a part of his absolute; for if he had not a power to do everything that he could will, he might not have a power to do everything that he doth will.

The object of his absolute power is all things possible; such things that imply not a contradiction, such that are not repugnant in their own nature to be done, and such as are not contrary to the nature and perfections of God to be done. Those things that are repugnant in their own nature to be done are several, as to make a thing which is past not to be past. As for example, the world is created. God could have chose whether he would create the world, and after it is created he hath power to dissolve it; but after it was created, and when it is dissolved, it will be eternally true that the world was created, and that it was dissolved; for it is impossible that that which was once true should ever be false. If it be true that the world was created, it will for ever be true that it was created, and cannot be otherwise; and also, if it be once true that God hath decreed, it is impossible in its own nature to be true that God hath not decreed. Some things are repugnant to the nature and perfections of God, as it is impossible for his nature to die and perish, impossible for him, in regard of truth, to lie and

* Scaliger, Publ. Exercit., 365, sec. 8.

deceive ; but of this hereafter. Only at present to understand the object of God's absolute power to be things possible, that is, possible in nature ; not by any strength in themselves or of themselves, for nothing hath no strength, and everything is nothing before it comes into being.* So God, by his absolute power, might have prevented the sin of the fallen angels, and so have preserved them in their first habitation. He might, by his absolute power, have restrained the devil from tempting of Eve, or restrained her and Adam from swallowing the bait, and joining hands with the temptation. By his absolute power, God might have given the reins to Peter to betray his master, as well as to deny him, and employed Judas in the same glorious and successful service wherein he employed Paul. By his absolute power, he might have created the world millions of years before he did create it, and can reduce it into its empty nothing this moment. This the Baptist affirms when he tells us, that ' God is able of these stones ' (meaning the stones in the wilderness, and not the people which came out to him out of Judea, which were children of Abraham) ' to raise up children to Abraham,' Mat. iii. 9, that is, there is a possibility of such a thing, there is no contradiction in it, but that God is able to do it if he please.

But now the object of his ordinate power is all things ordained by him to be done, all things decreed by him ; and because of the divine ordination of things, this power is called ordinate ; and what is thus ordained by him he cannot but do, because of his unchangeableness. Both those powers are expressed, Mat. xxvi. 53, 54, ' My Father can send twelve legions of angels,' there is his absolute power ; ' but how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be ? ' there is his ordinate power. As his power is free from any act of his will, it is called absolute ; as it is joined with an act of his will, it is called ordinate. His absolute power is necessary, and belongs to his nature ; his ordinate power is free, and belongs to his will, a power guided by his will : not, as I said before, that they are two distinct powers, both belonging to his nature, but the latter is the same with the former, only it is guided by his will and wisdom.

3. It follows, then, that the power of God is that ability and strength whereby he can bring to pass whatsoever he please, whatsoever his infinite wisdom can direct, and whatsoever the infinite purity of his will can resolve. Power, in the primary notion of it, doth not signify an act, but an ability to bring a thing into act ; it is power, as able to act before it doth actually produce a thing. As God had an ability to create before he did create, he had power before he acted that power without. Power notes the principle of the action, and therefore is greater than the act itself. Power exercised and diffused in bringing forth and nursing up its particular objects without, is unconceivably less than that strength which is infinite in himself, the same with his essence, and is indeed himself. By his power exercised, he doth whatsoever he actually wills ; but by the power in his nature, he is able to do whatsoever he is able to will. The will of creatures may be, and is more extensive than their power, and their power more contracted and shortened than their will ; but, as the prophet saith, ' His counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure,' Isa. xli. 10. His power is as great as his will ; that is, whatsoever can fall within the verge of his will, falls within the compass of his power. Though he will never actually will this or that, yet supposing he should will it, he is able to perform it. So that you must in your notion of divine power enlarge it further than to think God can only do what he hath resolved to do ; but that he hath as infinite a capacity of power to act as he hath an infinite capacity of will to resolve.

* Estius in Sent., lib. i. dist. 43, sec. 2.

Besides, this power is of that nature, that he can do whatsoever he pleases without difficulty, without resistance; it cannot be checked, restrained, frustrated.* As he can do all things possible in regard of the object, he can do all things easily in regard of the manner of acting. What in human artificers is knowledge, labour, industry, that in God is his will; his will works without labour, his works stand forth as he wills them. Hands and arms are ascribed to him for our conceptions, because our power of acting is distinct from our will; but God's power of acting is not really distinct from his will, it is sufficient to the existence of a thing that God wills it to exist; he can act what he will only by his will, without any instruments. He needs no matter to work upon, because he can make something from nothing; all matter owes itself to his creative power. He needs no time to work in, for he can make time when he pleases to begin to work; he needs no copy to work by, himself is his own pattern and copy in his works. All created agents want matter to work upon, instruments to work with, copies to work by, time to bring either the births of their minds or the works of their hands to perfection; but the power of God needs none of these things, but is of a vast and incomprehensible nature, beyond all these. As nothing can be done without the compass of it, so itself is without the compass of every created understanding.

4. This power is of a distinct conception from the wisdom and will of God. They are not really distinct, but according to our conceptions. We cannot discourse of divine things without observing some proportion of them with human, ascribing unto God the perfections, sifted from the imperfections of our nature. In us there are three orders, of understanding, will, power; and accordingly three acts, counsel, resolution, execution; which, though they are distinct in us, are not really distinct in God. In our conceptions, the apprehension of a thing belongs to the understanding of God; determination, to the will of God; direction, to the wisdom of God; execution, to the power of God. The knowledge of God regards a thing as possible, and as it may be done; the wisdom of God regards a thing as fit and convenient to be done; the will of God resolves that it shall be done; the power of God is the application of his will to effect what it hath resolved. Wisdom is a fixing the being of things, the measures and perfections of their several beings; power is a conferring those perfections and beings upon them. His power is his ability to act, and his wisdom is the director of his action. His will orders, his wisdom guides, and his power effects. His will as the spring, and his power as the worker, are expressed, Ps. cxv. 3, 'He hath done whatsoever he pleased.' 'He commanded, and they were created,' Ps. cxlviii. 5. And all three expressed Eph. i. 11, 'Who works all things according to the counsel of his own will.' So that the power of God is a perfection (as it were) subordinate to his understanding and will, to execute the results of his wisdom and the orders of his will; to his wisdom, as directing, because he works skilfully; to his will, as moving and applying, because he works voluntarily and freely. The exercise of his power depends upon his will. His will is the supreme cause of everything that stands up in time, and all things receive a being as he wills them. His power is but will perpetually working, and diffusing itself in the season his will hath fixed from eternity. It is his eternal will, in perpetual and successive springs and streams in the creatures; it is nothing else but the constant efficacy of his omnipotent will. This must be understood of his ordinate power. But his absolute power is larger than his resolving will; for though the Scripture tells us he hath done whatsoever he will, yet it tells

* Cra. Syntag., lib. iii. cap. xvii. p. 611.

us not that he hath done whatsoever he could. He can do things that he will never do.

Again, his power is distinguished from his will in regard of the exercise of it, which is after the act of his will. His will was conversant about objects when his power was not exercised about them. Creatures were the objects of his will from eternity, but they were not from eternity the effects of his power. His purpose to create was from eternity, but the execution of his purpose was in time. Now, this execution of his will we call his ordinate power. His wisdom and his will are supposed antecedent to his power, as the counsel and resolve, as the cause precedes the performance of the purpose, as the effect. Some* distinguish his power from his understanding and will, in regard that his understanding and will are larger than his absolute power; for God understands sins, and wills to permit them, but he cannot himself do any evil or unjust action, nor have a power of doing it. But this is not to distinguish that divine power, but impotence†; for to be unable to do evil is the perfection of power, and to be able to do things unjust and evil is a weakness, imperfection, and inability. Man indeed wills many things that he is not able to perform, and understands many things that he is not able to effect; he understands much of the creatures, something of sun, moon, and stars; he can conceive many suns, many moons, yet is not able to create the least atom. But there is nothing that belongs to power but God understands and is able to effect. To sum this up, the will of God is the root of all, the wisdom of God is the copy of all, and the power of God is the framer of all.

5. The power of God gives activity to all the other perfections of his nature, and is of a larger extent and efficacy, in regard of its objects, than some perfections of his nature. I put them both together.

(1.) It contributes life and activity to all the other perfections of his nature. How vain would be his eternal counsels, if power did not step in to execute them? His mercy would be a feeble pity, if he were destitute of power to relieve; and his justice a slighted scare-crow, without power to punish; his promises an empty sound, without power to accomplish them. As holiness is the beauty, so power is the life of all his attributes in their exercise; and as holiness, so power is an adjunct belonging to all, a term that may be given to all. God hath a powerful wisdom to attain his ends, without interruption. He hath a powerful mercy to remove our misery; a powerful justice to lay all misery upon offenders; he hath a powerful truth to perform his promises; an infinite power to bestow rewards and inflict penalties. It is to this purpose power is first put in the two things which the psalmist had heard: Ps. lxii. 11, 12, 'Twice have I heard,' or 'two things have I heard;' first power, then mercy and justice included in that expression, 'Thou renderest to every man according to his work.' In every perfection of God he heard of power. This is the arm, the hand of the Deity, which all his other attributes lay hold on, when they would appear in their glory; this hands them to the world, by this they act, in this they triumph. Power framed every stage for their appearance in creation, providence, redemption.

(2.) It is of a larger extent, in regard of its objects, than some other attributes. Power doth not alway suppose an object, but constitutes an object. It supposeth an object in the act of preservation, but it makes an object in the act of creation; but mercy supposeth an object miserable, yet doth not make it so. Justice supposeth an object criminal, but doth not constitute it so; mercy supposeth him miserable, to relieve him. Justice supposeth

* Gamacheus.

† Qu. 'impotence, but power'?—ED.

him criminal, to punish him ; but power supposeth not a thing in real existence, but as possible ; or rather, it is from power that anything hath a possibility, if there be no repugnancy in the nature of the thing.

Again, power extends further than either mercy or justice. Mercy hath particular objects, which justice shall not at last be willing to punish ; and justice hath particular objects, which mercy at last shall not be willing to refresh ; but power doth, and alway will extend to the objects of both mercy and justice. A creature, as a creature, is neither the object of mercy nor justice, nor of rewarding goodness ; a creature, as innocent, is the object of rewarding goodness ; a creature, as miserable, is the object of compassionate mercy ; a creature, as criminal, is the object of revenging justice ; but all of them the objects of power, in conjunction with those attributes of goodness, mercy, and justice, to which they belong. All the objects that mercy, and justice, and truth, and wisdom, exercise themselves about, have a possibility and an actual being from this perfection of divine power. It is power first frames a creature in a capacity of nature for mercy or justice, though it doth not give an immediate qualification for the exercise of either. Power makes man a rational creature, and so confers upon him a nature mutable, which may be miserable by its own fault, and punishable by God's justice, or pitiable by God's compassion, and relievable by God's mercy ; but it doth not make him sinful, whereby he becomes miserable and punishable.

Again, power runs through all the decrees of the states of a creature. As a thing is possible, or may be made, it is the object of absolute power ; as it is *factibile*, or ordered to be made, it is the object of ordinate power. As a thing is actually made, and brought into being, it is the object of preserving power. So that power doth stretch out its arms to all the works of God, in all their circumstances, and at all times. When mercy ceaseth to relieve a creature, when justice ceaseth to punish a creature, power ceaseth not to preserve a creature. The blessed in heaven, that are out of the reach of punishing justice, are for ever maintained by power in that blessed condition ; the damned in hell, that are cast out of the bosom of entreating mercy, are for ever sustained in those remediless torments by the arm of power.

6. This power is originally and essentially in the nature of God, and not distinct from his essence. It is originally and essentially in God. The strength and power of great kings is originally in their people, and managed and ordered by the authority of the prince for the common good. Though a prince hath authority in his person to command, yet he hath not sufficient strength in his person, without the assistance of others, to make his commands to be obeyed. He hath not a single strength in his own person to conquer countries and kingdoms, and increase the number of his subjects. He must make use of the arms of his own subjects, to overrun other places, and yoke them under his dominion. But the power of all things that ever were, are, or shall be, is originally and essentially in God. It is not derived from anything without him, as the power of the greatest potentates in the world is. Therefore, Ps. lxii. 11, it is said, ' power belongs unto God,' that is, solely, and to none else. He hath a power to make his subjects, and as many as he pleases ; to create worlds, to enjoin precepts, to execute penalties, without calling in the strength of his creatures to his aid. The strength that the subjects of a mortal prince have, is not derived to them from the prince, though the exercise of it for this or that end is ordered and directed by the authority of the prince. But what strength soever anything hath to act as a means, it hath from the power of God as Creator, as well as what-

soever authority it hath to act is from God, as a rector and governor of the world. God hath a strength to act without means, and no means can act anything without his power and strength communicated to them. As the clouds in the 8th verse before the text are called God's clouds, 'his clouds,' so all the strength of creatures may be called, and truly is, God's strength and power in them; a drop of power shot down from heaven, originally only in God. Creatures have but a little mite of power; somewhat communicated to them, somewhat kept and reserved from* them, of what they are capable to possess. They have limited natures, and therefore a limited sphere of activity. Clothes can warm us, but not feed us; bread can nourish us, but not clothe us. One plant hath a medicinal quality against one disease, another against another; but God is the possessor of universal power, the common exchequer of this mighty treasure. He acts by creatures, as not needing their power, but deriving power to them; what he acts by them, he could act himself without them; and what they act as from themselves, is derived to them from him through invisible channels. And hence it will follow, that because power is essentially in God, more operations of God are possible than are exerted.

And as power is essentially in God, so it is not distinct from his essence. It belongs to God in regard of the unconceivable excellency and activity of his essence.† And omnipotence is nothing but the divine essence efficacious *ad extra*. It is his essence as operative, and the immediate principle of operation; as the power of enlightening in the sun, and the power of heating in the fire, are not things distinct from the nature of them; but the nature of the sun bringing forth light, and the nature of the fire bringing forth heat. The power of acting is the same with the substance of God, though the action from that power be terminated in the creature. If the power of God were distinct from his essence, he were then compounded of substance and power, and would not be the most simple being. As when the understanding is informed in several parts of knowledge, it is skilled in the government of cities and countries, it knows this or that art, it learns mathematics, philosophy, this or that science, the understanding hath a power to do this; but this power, whereby it learns those excellent things, and brings forth excellent births, is not a thing distinct from the understanding itself; we may rather call it the *understanding powerful*, than the *power of the understanding*; and so we may rather say *God powerful*, than say, *the power of God*; because his power is not distinct from his essence.

From both these it will follow, that this omnipotence is communicable to any creature; no creature can inherit it, because it is a contradiction for any creature to have the essence of God. This omnipotence is a peculiar right of God, wherein no creature can share with him. To be omnipotent is to be essentially God. And for a creature to be omnipotent, is for a creature to be its own Creator. It being therefore the same with the essence of the Godhead, it cannot be communicated to the humanity of Christ, as the Lutherans say it is, without the communication of the essence of the Godhead; for then the humanity of Christ would not be humanity, but deity. If omnipotence were communicated to the humanity of Christ, the essence of God were also communicated to his humanity, and then eternity would be communicated. His humanity then was not given him in time, his humanity would be uncompounded, that is, his body would be no body, his soul no soul. Omnipotence is essentially in God; it is not distinct from the essence of God, it is his essence, *omnipotent*, able to do all things.

* Qu. 'for?'—Ed.

† Ratione summæ actualitatis essentiae.—*Suarez*, vol. i. p. 150, 151.

7. Hence it follows that this power is infinite: Eph. i. 19, 'What is the exceeding greatness of his power,' &c., 'according to the working of his mighty power.' God were not omnipotent unless his power were infinite; for a finite power is a limited power, and a limited power cannot effect everything that is possible. Nothing can be too difficult for the divine power to effect. He hath a fulness of power, an exceeding strength, above all human capacities; it is a mighty power, Eph. i. 19, able to do 'above all that we can ask or think, Eph. iii. 20. That which he acts is above the power of any creature to act. Infinite power consists in the bringing things forth from nothing. No creature can imitate God in this prerogative of power. Man indeed can carve various forms, and erect various pieces of art, but from pre-existent matter. Every artificer hath the matter brought to his hand, he only brings it forth in a new figure. Chemists separate one thing from another, but create nothing, but sever those things which were before compacted and curdled together; but when God speaks a powerful word, nothing begins to be something. Things stand forth from the womb of nothing, and obey his mighty command, and take what forms he is pleased to give them. The creating one thing, though never so small and minute, as the least fly, cannot be but by an infinite power, much less can the producing of such variety we see in the world. His power is infinite, in regard it cannot be resisted by anything that he hath made, nor can it be confined by anything he can will to make. 'His greatness is unsearchable, Ps. cxlv. 3. It is a greatness, not of quantity, but quality. The greatness of his power hath no end. It is a vanity to imagine any limits can be affixed to it, or that any creature can say, 'Hitherto it can go, and no further.' It is above all conception, all inquisition of any created understanding. No creature ever had, nor ever can have, that strength of wit and understanding to conceive the extent of his power, and how magnificently he can work.

(1.) His essence is infinite. As in a finite subject there is a finite virtue, so in an infinite subject there must be an infinite virtue. Where the essence is limited, the power is so;* where the essence is unlimited, the power knows no bounds.† Among creatures, the more excellency of being and form anything hath, the more activity, vigour, and power it hath to work according to its nature. The sun hath a mighty power to warm, enlighten, and fructify, above what the stars have, because it hath a vaster body, more intense degrees of light, heat, and vigour. Now if you conceive the sun made much greater than it is, it would proportionably have greater degrees of power to heat and enlighten than it hath now; and were it possible to have an infinite heat and light, it would infinitely heat and enlighten other things; for everything is able to act according to the measures of its being. Therefore, since the essence of God is unquestionably infinite, his power of acting must be so also. His power (as was said before) is one and the same with his essence. And though the knowledge of God extends to more objects than his power, because he knows all evils of sin, which, because of his holiness, he cannot commit; yet it is as infinite as his knowledge, because it is as much one with his essence as his knowledge and wisdom is. For as the wisdom or knowledge of God is nothing but the essence of God knowing, so the power of God is nothing but the essence of God able.

(2.) The objects of divine power are innumerable. The objects of divine power are not essentially infinite; and therefore we must not measure the infiniteness of divine power by an ability to make an infinite being, because there is an incapacity in any created thing to be infinite; for to be a creature and to be infinite, to be infinite and yet made, is a contradiction.

* Operationes sequuntur essentiam.

† Aquin. par. i. qu. 25, artic. 2.

To be infinite, and to be God, is one and the same thing. Nothing can be infinite but God, nothing but God is infinite. But the power of God is infinite, because it can produce infinite effects, or innumerable things, such as surpass the arithmetic of a creature; nor yet doth the infiniteness consist simply in producing innumerable effects, for that a finite cause can produce. Fire can by its finite and limited heat burn numberless combustible things and parcels, and the understanding of man hath an infinite number of thoughts and acts of intellection, and thoughts different from one another. Who can number the imaginations of his fancy, and thoughts of his mind, the space of one month or year? much less of forty or a hundred years; yet all these thoughts are about things that are in being, or have a foundation in things that are in being. But the infiniteness of God's power consists in an ability to produce infinite effects, formally distinct, and diverse from one another, such as never had being, such as the mind of man cannot conceive: 'Able to do above what we can think,' Eph. iii. 20. And whatsoever God hath made, or is able to make, he is able to make in an infinite manner, by calling them to stand forth from nothing. To produce innumerable effects of distinct natures, and from so distant a term as nothing, is an argument of infinite power.

Now, that the objects of divine power are innumerable, appears, because God can do infinitely more than he hath done or will do. Nothing that God hath done can enfeeble or dull his power; there still resides in him an ability beyond all the settled contrivances of his understanding and resolves of his will, which no effects which he hath wrought can drain and put to a stand. As he can raise stones to be children to Abraham, Mat. iii. 9, so with the same mighty word whereby he made one world, he can make infinite numbers of worlds to be the monuments of his glory. After the prophet Jeremiah, xxxii. 17, had spoke of God's power in creation, he adds, 'And nothing is too hard for thee.' For one world that he hath made he can create millions, for one star which he hath beautified the heavens with he could have garnished it with a thousand, and multiplied, if he had pleased, every one of those into millions; for he can 'call things that are not,' Rom. iv. 17; not some things, but all things possible. The barren womb of nothing can no more resist his power now to educe a world from it than it could at first. No doubt but for one angel which he hath made he could make many worlds of angels. He that made one with so much ease as by a word, cannot want power to make many more, till he wants a word. The word that was not too weak to make one, cannot be too weak to make multitudes. If from one man he hath, in a way of nature, multiplied so many in all ages of the world, and covered with them the whole face of the earth, he could in a supernatural way, by one word, multiply as many more. It is 'the breath of the Almighty that gives life,' Job. xxxiii. 4. He can create infinite species and kinds of creatures more than he hath created, more variety of forms. For since there is no searching of his greatness, there is no conceiving the numberless possible effects of his power. The understanding of man can conceive numberless things possible to be, more than have been or shall be. And shall we imagine that a finite understanding of a creature hath a greater omnipotency to conceive things possible, than God hath to produce things possible? When the understanding of man is tired in its conceptions, it must still be concluded that the power of God extends not only to what can be conceived, but infinitely beyond the measures of a finite faculty: 'Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out: he is excellent in power and in judgment,' Job xxxvii. 23. For the understanding of man, in its conceptions of more kind of creatures, is limited to those

creatures which are. It cannot in its own imaginations conceive anything but what hath some foundation in and from something already in being. It may frame a new kind of creature, made up of a lion, a horse, an ox; but all those parts whereof its conceptions are made have distinct beings in the world, though not in that composition as his mind mixes and joins them. But no question but God can create creatures that have no resemblance with any kind of creatures yet in being. It is certain that if God only knows those things which he hath done and will do, and not all things possible to be done by him, his knowledge were finite; so if he could do no more than what he hath done, his power would be finite.

[1.] Creatures have a power to act about more objects than they do. The understanding of man can frame, from one principle of truth, many conclusions and inferences more than it doth. Why cannot then the power of God frame from one first matter an infinite number of creatures more than have been created? The almightiness of God in producing real effects is not inferior to the understanding of man in drawing out real truths. An artificer that makes a watch, supposing his life and health, can make many more of a different form and motion; and a limner can draw many draughts, and frame many pictures with a new variety of colours, according to the richness of his fancy. If these can do so, that require a pre-existent matter framed to their hands, God can much more, who can raise beautiful structures from nothing. As long as men have matter, they can diversify the matter, and make new figures from it; so long as there is nothing, God can produce out of that nothing whatsoever he pleases.

We see the same in inanimate creatures. A spark of fire hath a vast power in it; it will kindle other things, increase and enlarge itself. Nothing can be exempt from the active force of it. It will alter, by consuming or refining, whatsoever you offer to it. It will reach all, and refuse none; and by the efficacious power of it, all those new figures which we see in metals are brought forth. When you have exposed to it a multitude of things, still add more, it will exert the same strength, yea, the vigour is increased rather than diminished. The more it catcheth, the more fiercely and irresistibly it will act; you cannot suppose an end of its operation, or a decrease of its strength, as long as you can conceive its duration and continuance. This must be but a weak shadow of that infinite power which is in God. Take another instance in the sun. It hath power every year to produce flowers and plants from the earth, and is as able to produce them now as it was at the first lighting it and rearing it in the sphere wherein it moves. And if there were no* kind of flowers and plants now created, the sun hath a power residing in it, ever since its first creation, to afford the same warmth to them for the nourishing and bringing them forth. Whatsoever you can conceive the sun to be able to do in regard of plants, that can God do in regard of worlds, produce more worlds than the sun doth plants every year, without weariness, without languishment. The sun is able to influence more things than it doth, and produce numberless effects; but it doth not do so much as it is able to do, because it wants matter to work upon. God, therefore, who wants no matter, can do much more than he doth; he can either act by second causes if there were more, or make more second causes if he pleased.

[2.] God is the most free agent. Every free agent can do more than he will do. Man being a free creature, can do more than ordinarily he doth will to do. God is most free, as being the spring of liberty in other creatures. He acts not by a necessity of nature, as the waves of the sea, or

* Qu. 'new'?—ED.

the motions of the wind, and therefore is not determined to those things which he hath already called forth into the world. If God be infinitely wise in contrivance, he could contrive more than he hath, and therefore can effect more than he hath effected. He doth not act to the extent of his power upon all occasions. It is according to his will that he works, Eph. i. 11. It is not according to his work that he wills; his work is an evidence of his will, but not the rule of his will. His power is not the rule of his will, but his will is the disposer of his power, according to the light of his infinite wisdom, and other attributes that direct his will; and therefore his power is not to be measured by his actual will. No doubt but he could in a moment have produced that world which he took six days' time to frame. He could have drowned the old world at once, without prolonging the time till the revolution of forty days. He was not limited to such a term of time by any weakness, but by the determination of his own will. God doth not do the hundred thousandth part of what he is able to do, but what is convenient to do, according to the end which he hath proposed to himself. Jesus Christ, as man, could have asked legions of angels; and God, as a sovereign, could have sent them, Mat. xxvi. 53. God could raise the dead every day if he pleased, but he doth not. He could heal every diseased person in a moment, but he doth not. As God can will more than he doth actually will, so he can do more than he hath actually done. He can do whatsoever he can will; he can will more worlds, and therefore can create more worlds. If God hath not ability to do more than he will do, he then can do no more than what he actually hath done; and then it will follow that he is not a free, but a natural and necessary agent, which cannot be supposed of God.

(3.) This power is infinite in regard of action. As he can produce numberless objects above what he hath produced, so he could produce them more magnificently than he hath made them. As he never works to the extent of his power in regard of things, so neither in the manner of acting; for he never acts so, but he could act in a higher and perfecter manner.

[1.] His power is infinite in regard of the independency of action. He wants no instrument to act. When there was nothing but God, there was no cause of action but God. When there was nothing in being but God, there could be no instrumental cause of the being of anything. God can perfect his action without dependence on anything;* and to be simply independent is to be simply infinite. In this respect it is a power incommunicable to any creature, though you conceive a creature in higher degrees of perfection than it is. A creature cannot cease to be dependent, but it must cease to be a creature: to be a creature and independent, are terms repugnant to one another.

[2.] But the infiniteness of divine power consists in an ability to give higher degrees of perfection to everything which he hath made. As his power is infinite *extensive*, in regard of the multitude of objects he can bring into being, so it is infinite *intensive*, in regard of the manner of operation, and the endowments he can bestow upon them.† Some things, indeed, God doth so perfect, that higher degrees of perfection cannot be imagined to be added to them.‡ As the humanity of Christ cannot be united more gloriously than to the person of the Son of God, a greater degree of perfection cannot be conferred upon it; nor can the souls of the blessed have a nobler object of vision and fruition than God himself, the infinite being. No higher than the enjoyment of himself can be conferred upon a creature, *respectu termini*. This is not want of power. He cannot be greater because he is greatest, nor better because he is best; nothing can be more than infinite;

* Suarez, de Deo, vol. i. p. 151.

† Becan., Sum. Theol. p. 84.

‡ Becan., Sum. Theol. p. 82.

but as to the things which God hath made in the world, he could have given them other manner of beings than they have. A human understanding may improve a thought or conclusion, strengthen it with more and more force of reason, and adorn it with richer and richer elegance of language; why, then, may not the divine providence produce a world more perfect and excellent than this? He that makes a plain vessel can embellish it more, engrave more figures upon it, according to the capacity of the subject; and cannot God do so much more with his works? Could not God have made this world of a larger quantity, and the sun of a greater bulk and proportionable strength to influence a bigger world; so that this world would have been to another that God might have made as a ball or a mount, this sun as a star to another sun that he might have kindled? He could have made every star a sun, every spire of grass a star, every grain of dust a flower, every soul an angel. And though the angels be perfect creatures, and inexpressibly more glorious than a visible creature, yet who can imagine God so confined that he cannot create a more excellent kind, and endow those which he hath made with excellency of a higher rank than he invested them with at the first moment of their creation? Without question God might have given the meaner creatures more excellent endowments, put them into another order of nature for their own good, and more diffusive usefulness in the world. What is made use of by the prophet in another case, may be used in this, 'yet had he a residue of Spirit,' Mal. ii. 15. The capacity of every creature might have been enlarged by God; for no work of his in the world doth equal his power, as nothing that he hath framed doth equal his wisdom. The same matter which is the matter of the body of a beast, is the matter of a plant and flower, is the matter of the body of a man, and so was capable of a higher form and higher perfections than God hath been pleased to bestow upon it. And he had power to bestow that perfection on one part of matter which he denied to it, and bestowed on another part. If God cannot make things in a greater perfection, there must be some limitation of him. He cannot be limited by another, because nothing is superior to God. If limited by himself, that limitation is not from a want of power, but a want of will. He can by his own power raise stones to be children to Abraham, Mat. iii. 9. He could alter the nature of the stones, form them into human bodies, dignify them with rational souls, inspire those souls with such graces that may render them the children of Abraham. But for the more fully understanding the nature of this power, we may observe,

First, That though God can make everything with a higher degree of perfection, yet still within the limits of a finite being. No creature can be made infinite, because no creature can be made God. No creature can be so improved as to equal the goodness and perfection of God;* yet there is no creature but we may conceive a possibility of its being made more perfect in that rank of a creature than it is; as we may imagine a flower or plant to have greater beauty and richer qualities imparted to it by divine power, without rearing it so high as to the dignity of a rational or sensitive creature. Whatsoever perfections may be added by God to a creature, are still finite perfections; and a multitude of finite excellencies can never amount to the value and honour of infinite: as if you add one number to another as high as you can, as much as a large piece of paper can contain, you can never make the numbers really infinite, though they may be infinite in regard of the inability of any human understanding to count them. The finite condition of the creature suffers it not to be capable of an infinite perfection. God is so great, so excellent, that it is his perfection not to have any equal; the

* Gamach. in Aquin., tom. i. qu. 25.

defect is in the creature, which cannot be elevated to such a pitch; as you can never make a gallon measure hold the quantity of a butt, or a butt the quantity of a river, or a river the fulness of the sea.

Secondly, Though God hath a power to furnish every creature with greater and nobler perfections than he hath bestowed upon it, yet he hath framed all things in the perfectest manner, and most convenient to that end for which he intended them. Everything is endowed with the best nature and quality suitable to God's end in creation, though not in the best manner for itself.* In regard of the universal end, there cannot be a better; for God himself is the end of all things, who is the supreme goodness. Nothing can be better than God, who could not be God if he were not superlatively best or *optimus*; and he hath ordered all things for the declaration of his goodness or justice, according to the behaviours of his creatures. Man doth not consider what strength or power he can put forth in the means he useth to attain such an end, but the suitableness of them to his main design, and so fits and marshals them to his grand purpose. Had God only created things that are most excellent, he had created only angels and men; how, then, would his wisdom have been conspicuous in other works, in the subordination and subserviency of them to one another? God therefore determined his power by his wisdom; and although his absolute power could have made every creature better, yet his ordinate power, which in every step was regulated by his wisdom, made everything best for his designed intention.† A musician hath a power to wind up a string on a lute to a higher and more perfect note in itself; but in wisdom he will not do it, because the intended melody should be disturbed thereby if it were not suited to the other strings on the instrument; a discord would mar and taint the harmony which the lutenist designed. God in creation observed the proportions of nature; he can make a spider as strong as a lion, but according to the order of nature which he hath settled, it is not convenient that a creature of so small a compass should be as strong as one of a greater bulk. The absolute power of God could have prepared a body for Christ as glorious as that he had after his resurrection, but that had not been agreeable to the end designed in his humiliation; and therefore God acted most perfectly by his ordinate power in giving him a body that wore the livery of our infirmities. God's power is always regulated by his wisdom and will; and though it produceth not what is most perfect in itself, yet what is most perfect and decent in relation to the end he fixed. And so in his providence, though he could rack the whole frame of nature to bring about his ends in a more miraculous way and astonishment to mortals, yet his power is usually and ordinarily confined by his will to act in concurrence with the nature of the creatures, and direct them according to the laws of their being, to such ends which he aims at in their conduct, without violencing their nature.

Thirdly, Though God hath an absolute power to make more worlds, and infinite numbers of other creatures, and to render every creature a higher mark of his power, yet in regard of his decree to the contrary, he cannot do it. He hath a physical power, but after his resolve to the contrary, not a moral power. The exercise of his power is subordinate to his decree, but not the essence of his power.‡ The decree of God takes not away any power from God, because the power of God is his own essence, and incapable of change, and is as great physically and essentially after his decree as it was

* Best, *ex parte facientis et modi*, but not *ex parte rei*.—*Esti*. in *Senten.* lib. i. distin. xliv. sec. 2.

† Aquin. part i. qu. xxv. art. 6.

‡ Gamach. in Aquin. tom. i. qu. xxv.

before, only his will hath put in a bar to the demonstration of all that power which he is able to exercise. As a prince that can raise a hundred thousand men for an invasion raises only twenty or thirty thousand, he here, by his order, limits his power, but doth not divest himself of his authority and power to raise the whole number of the forces of his dominions if he pleases. The power of God hath more objects than his decree hath; but since it is his perfection to be immutable, and not to change his decree, he cannot morally put forth his power upon all those objects, which, as it is essentially in him, he hath ability to do. God hath decreed to save those that believe in Christ, and to judge unbelievers to everlasting perdition.* He cannot morally damn the first or save the latter; yet he hath not divested himself of his absolute power to save all or damn all. Or suppose God hath decreed not to create more worlds than this we are now in, doth his decree weaken his strength to create more if he pleased? His not creating more is not a want of strength, but a want of will; it is an act of liberty, not an act of impotency. As when a man solemnly resolves not to walk in such a way, or come at such a place, his resolution deprives him not of his natural strength to walk thither, but fortifies his will against using his strength in any such motion to that place. The will of God hath set bounds to the exercise of his power, but doth not infringe that absolute power which still resides in his nature; he is girded with more power than he puts forth, Ps. lxxv. 6.

(4.) As the power of God is infinite in regard of his essence, in regard of the objects, in regard of action, so, fourthly, in regard of duration. The apostle calls it an 'eternal power,' Rom. i. 20. His eternal power is collected and concluded from the things that are made; they must needs be the product of some being which contains truly in itself all power, who wrought them without engines, without instruments; and therefore this power must be infinite, and possessed of an unalterable virtue of acting. If it be eternal it must be infinite, and hath neither beginning nor end. What is eternal hath no bounds. If it be eternal, and not limited by time, it must be infinite, and not to be restrained by any finite object. His power never begun to be, nor ever ceaseth to be; it cannot languish. Men are fain to unbend themselves, and must have some time to recruit their tired spirits; but the power of God is perpetually vigorous, without any interrupting quail: Isa. xl. 28, 'Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?' That might which suffered no diminution from eternity, but hatched so great a world by brooding upon nothing, will not suffer any dimness or decrease to eternity. This power being the same with his essence, is as durable as his essence, and resides for ever in his nature.

8. The eighth consideration, for the right understanding of this attribute. The impossibility of God's doing some things, is no infringing of his almightiness, but rather a strengthening of it. It is granted that some things God cannot do; or rather, as Aquinas and others, it is better to say, such things cannot be done, than to say that God cannot do them; to remove all kind of imputation or reflection of weakness on God,† and because the reason of the impossibility of those things is in the nature of the things themselves.

(1.) First, Some things are impossible in their own nature. Such are all those things which imply a contradiction; as for a thing to be and not to be at the same time, for the sun to shine and not to shine at the same

* Crell. de Deo, cap. xxii.

† Robins. Observat. p. 14.

moment of time, for a creature to act and not to act at the same instant. One of those parts must be false; for if it be true that the sun shines this moment, it must be false to say it doth not shine. So it is impossible that a rational creature can be without reason. It is a contradiction to be a rational creature, and yet want that which is essential to a rational creature; so it is impossible that the will of man can be compelled, because liberty is the essence of the will. While it is will, it cannot be constrained; and if it be constrained, it ceaseth to be will. God cannot at one time act as the author of the will and the destroyer of the will.* It is impossible that vice and virtue, light and darkness, life and death, should be the same thing. Those things admit not of a conception in any understanding. Some things are impossible to be done, because of the incapability of the subject; as for a creature to be made infinite, independent, to preserve itself without the divine concurrence and assistance. So a brute cannot be taken into communion with God, and to everlasting spiritual blessedness, because the nature of a brute is incapable of such an elevation. A rational creature only can understand and relish spiritual delights, and is capable to enjoy God and have communion with him. Indeed, God may change the nature of a brute, and bestow such faculties of understanding and will upon it as to render it capable of such a blessedness; but then it is no more a brute, but a rational creature; but while it remains a brute, the excellency of the nature of God doth not admit of communion with such a subject; so that this is not for want of power in God, but because of a deficiency in the creature. To suppose that God could make a contradiction true, is to make himself false, and to do just nothing.

(2.) Some things are impossible to the nature and being of God. As to die, implies a flat repugnance to the nature of God; to be able to die, is to be able to be cashiered out of being. If God were able to deprive himself of life, he might then cease to be; he were not then a necessary, but an uncertain, contingent being, and could not be said 'only to have immortality' as he is, 1 Tim. vi. 16. He cannot die who is life itself, and necessarily existent; he cannot grow old or decay, because he cannot be measured by time. And this is no part of weakness, but the perfection of power. His power is that whereby he remains for ever fixed in his own everlasting being; that cannot be reckoned as necessary to the omnipotence of God which all mankind count a part of weakness in themselves. God is omnipotent, because he is not impotent, and if he could die he would be impotent, not omnipotent; death is the feebleness of nature. It is undoubtedly the greatest impotence to cease to be. Who would count it a part of omnipotency to disenable himself, and sink into nothing and not being? The impossibility for God to die is not a fit article to impeach his omnipotence. This would be a strange way of arguing; a thing is not powerful because it is not feeble, and cannot cease to be powerful, for death is a cessation of all power. God is almighty in doing what he will, not in suffering what he will not.† To die is not an active, but a passive, power; a defect of a power. God is of too noble a nature to perish.

Some things are impossible to that eminency of nature which he hath above all creatures; as to walk, sleep, feed, these are imperfections belonging to bodies and compound natures. If he could walk, he were not everywhere present. Motion speaks succession. If he could increase, he would not have been perfect before.

(3.) Some things are impossible to the glorious perfections of God. God cannot do anything unbecoming his holiness and goodness, anything

* Magalano, de scientiâ Dei, part ii. cap. vi. sec. 3.

† August.

unworthy of himself, and against the perfections of his nature. God can do whatsoever he can will. As he doth actually do whatsoever he doth actually will, so it is possible for him to do whatsoever it is possible for him to will. He doth whatsoever he will, and can do whatsoever he can will, but he cannot do what he cannot will. He cannot will any unrighteous thing, and therefore cannot do any unrighteous thing. God cannot love sin, this is contrary to his holiness; he cannot violate his word, this is a denial of his truth; he cannot punish an innocent, this is contrary to his goodness; he cannot cherish an impenitent sinner, this is an injury to his justice; he cannot forget what is done in the world, this is a disgrace to his omniscience; he cannot deceive his creature, this is contrary to his faithfulness. None of these things can be done by him, because of the perfection of his nature. Would it not be an imperfection in God to absolve the guilty, and condemn the innocent? Is it congruous to the righteous and holy nature of God to command murder and adultery, to command men not to worship him, but to be base and unthankful? These things would be against the rules of righteousness. As when we say of a good man, he cannot rob or fight a duel, we do not mean that he wants a courage for such an act, or that he hath not a natural strength and knowledge to manage his weapon as well as another, but he hath a righteous principle strong in him which will not suffer him to do it; his will is settled against it. No power can pass into act unless applied by the will. But the will of God cannot will anything but what is worthy of him, and decent for his goodness.

[1.] The Scripture saith, it is 'impossible for God to lie,' Heb. vi. 13; and God 'cannot deny himself,' 2 Tim. ii. 13, because of his faithfulness. As he cannot die, because he is life itself; as he cannot deceive, because he is goodness itself; as he cannot do an unwise action, because he is wisdom itself; so he cannot speak a false word, because he is truth itself. If he should speak anything as true, and not know it, where is his infinite knowledge and comprehensiveness of understanding? If he should speak anything as true, which he knows to be false, where is his infinite righteousness? If he should deceive any creature, there is an end of his perfection, and fidelity, and veracity. If he should be deceived himself, there is an end of his omniscience; we must then fancy him to be a deceitful God, an ignorant God, that is, no God at all. If he should lie, he would be God and no God; God upon supposition, and no God, because not the first truth.* All unrighteousness is weakness, not power; it is a defection from right reason, a deviation 'from moral principles and the rule of perfect action, and ariseth from a defect of goodness and power. It is a weakness, and not omnipotence, to lose goodness.† God is light; it is the perfection of light not to become darkness, and a want of power in light, if it should become darkness. His power is infinitely strong, so is his wisdom infinitely clear, and his will infinitely pure. Would it not be a part of weakness to have a disorder in himself, and these perfections shock one against another? Since all perfections are in God in the most sovereign height of perfection, nothing can be done by the infiniteness of one against the infiniteness of the other. He would then be unstable in his own perfections, and depart from the infinite rectitude of his own will, if he should do an evil action. Again,‡ what is an argument of greater strength than to be utterly ignorant of infirmity? God is omnipotent, because he cannot do evil, and would not be omnipotent if he could. Those things would be marks of weakness, and not characters of majesty. Would you count a sweet fountain impotent,

* Becan. sum. Theolog. p. 83.

† Maximus Tyrius.

‡ Ambrose.

because it cannot send forth bitter streams? or the sun weak, because it cannot diffuse darkness as well as light in the air? There is an inability arising from weakness, and an ability* arising from perfection. It is the perfection of angels and blessed spirits that they cannot sin; and it would be the imperfection of God if he could do evil.

[2.] Hence it follows, that it is impossible that a thing past should not be past. If we ascribe a power to God, to make a thing that is past not to be past, we do not truly ascribe power to him, but a weakness, for it is to make God to lie; as though God might not have created man, yet after he had created Adam, though he should presently have reduced Adam to his first nothing, yet it would be for ever true that Adam was created, and it would for ever be false that Adam never was created. So though God may prevent sin, yet when sin hath been committed it will always be true that sin was committed. It will never be true to say such a creature that did sin, did not sin; his sin cannot be recalled. Though God by pardon take off the guilt of Peter's denying our Saviour, yet it will be eternally true that Peter did deny him. It is repugnant to the righteousness and truth of God, to make that which was once true to become false, and not true; that is, to make a truth to become a lie, and a lie to become a truth.

This is well argued from Heb. vi. 18, it is 'impossible for God to lie.' The apostle argues, that what God had promised and sworn will come to pass, and cannot but come to pass.† Now if God could make a thing past not to be past, this consequence would not be good, for then he might make himself not to have promised, not to have sworn, after he hath promised and sworn. And so if there were a power to undo that which is past, there would be no foundation for faith, no certainty of revelation. It cannot be asserted, that God hath created the world, that God hath sent his Son to die, that God hath accepted his death for man. These might not be true, if it were possible that that which hath been done might be said never to have been done; so that what any may imagine to be a want of power in God is the highest perfection of God, and the greatest security to a believing creature that hath to do with God.

(4.) Some things are impossible to be done, because of God's ordination. Some things are impossible, not in their own nature, but in regard of the determined will of God. So God might have destroyed the world after Adam's fall, but it was impossible; not that God wanted power to do it, but because he did not only decree from eternity to create the world, but did also decree to redeem the world by Jesus Christ, and erected the world in order to the manifestation of his glory in Christ: Eph. i. 4, 5, the choice of some in Christ was 'before the foundation of the world.' Supposing that there was no hindrance in the justice of God to pardon the sin of Adam after his fall, and to execute no punishment on him, yet in regard of God's threatening, that in the day he ate of the forbidden fruit he should die, it was impossible. So though it was possible that the cup should pass from our blessed Saviour, that is, possible in its own nature, yet it was not possible in regard of the determination of God's will, since he had both decreed and published his will to redeem man by the passion and blood of his Son. These things God by his absolute power might have done, but upon the account of his decree they were impossible, because it is repugnant to the nature of God to be mutable. It is to deny his own wisdom which contrived them, and his own will which resolved them, not to do that which he had decreed to do. This would be a diffidence in his wisdom, and a

* Qu. 'inability'?—Ed.

† Becan. sum. Theol. p. 84; Crel. de Deo, cap. xxii.

change of his will. The impossibility of them is no result of a want of power, no mark of an imperfection, of feebleness and impotence, but the perfection of immutability and unchangeableness.

Thus have I endeavoured to give you a right notion of this excellent attribute of the power of God, in as plain terms as I could, which may serve us for a matter of meditation, admiration, fear of him, trust in him, which are the proper uses we should make of this doctrine of divine power. The want of a right understanding of this doctrine of the divine power hath caused many to run into mighty absurdities; I have therefore taken the more pains to explain it.

II. The second thing I proposed, is the reasons to prove God to be omnipotent. The Scripture describes God by this attribute of power: Ps. cxv. 3, 'He hath done whatsoever he pleased.' It sometimes sets forth his power in a way of derision of those that seem to doubt of it. When Sarah doubted of his ability to give her a child in her old age, Gen. xviii. 14, 'Is anything too hard for the Lord?' They deserve to be scoffed that will despoil God of his strength, and measure him by their shallow models. And when Moses uttered something of unbelief of this attribute, as if God were not able to feed 600,000 Israelites, besides women and children, which he aggravates by a kind of imperious scoff: 'Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them to suffice them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them?' &c., Num. xi. 22, God takes him up short: ver. 23, 'Is the Lord's hand waxed short?' What, can any weakness seize upon my hand? Can I not draw out of my own treasures what is needful for a supply? The hand of God is not at one time strong, and another time feeble. Hence it is that we read of the hand and arm of God, an outstretched arm, because the strength of a man is exerted by his hand and arm; the power of God is called the arm of his power, and the right hand of his strength. Sometimes, according to the different manifestation of it, it is expressed by finger, when a less power is evidenced; by hand, when something greater; by arm, when more mighty than the former. Since God is eternal, without limits of time, he is also almighty, without limits of strength. As he cannot be said to be more in being now than he was before, so he is neither more nor less in strength than he was before; as he cannot cease to be, so he cannot cease to be powerful, because he is eternal. His eternity and power are linked together as equally demonstrable, Rom. i. 20. God is called the God of gods, *El Elohim*, Dan. xi. 36, the Mighty of mighties, whence all mighty persons have their activity and vigour; he is called the Lord of Hosts, as being the creator and conductor of the heavenly militia.

Reason 1. The power that is in creatures demonstrates a greater and an unconceivable power in God. Nothing in the world is without a power of activity according to its nature; no creature but can act something. The sun warms and enlightens everything; it sends its influences upon the earth, into the bowels of the earth, into the depths of the sea; all generations owe themselves to its instrumental virtue. How powerful is a small seed to rise into a mighty tree, with a lofty top and extensive branches, and send forth other seeds, which can still multiply into numberless plants! How wonderful is the power of the Creator, who hath endowed so small a creature as a seed with so fruitful an activity! Yet this is but the virtue of a limited nature. God is both the producing and preserving cause of all the virtue in any creature, in every creature. The power of every creature belongs to him as the fountain, and is truly his power in the creature. As he is the first being, he is the original of all being; as the first good, he is the spring of

all goodness ; as he is the first truth, he is the source of all truth ; so as he is the first power, he is the fountain of all power.

1. He therefore that communicates to the creature what power it hath, contains eminently much more power in himself : Ps. xciv. 10, ' He that teaches man knowledge, shall not he know ? ' So he that gives created beings power, shall not he be powerful ? The first being must have as much power as he hath given to others. He could not transfer that upon another, which he did not transcendently possess himself. The sole cause of created power cannot be destitute of any power in himself. We see that the power of one creature transcends the power of another. Beasts can do the things that plants cannot do ; besides the power of growth, they have a power of sense and progressive motion. Men can do more than beasts ; they have rational souls to measure the earth and heavens, and to be repositories of multitudes of things, notions, and conclusions. We may well imagine angels to be far superior to man. The power of the Creator must far surmount the power of the creature, and must needs be infinite ; for if it be limited, it is limited by himself or by some other ; if by some other, he is no longer a Creator, but a creature ; for that which limits him in his nature did communicate that nature to him ; not by himself, for he would not deny himself any necessary perfection. We must still conclude a reserve of power in him, that he that made these can make many more of the same kind.

2. All the power which is distinct in the creatures must be united in God. One creature hath a strength to do this, another to do that ; every creature is as a cistern filled with a particular and limited power, according to the capacity of its nature, from this fountain ; all are distinct streams from God. But the strength of every creature, though distinct in the rank of creatures, is united in God the centre, whence those lines were drawn, the fountain whence those streams were derived. If the power of one creature be admirable, as the power of an angel, which the psalmist saith, ' excelleth in strength,' Ps. ciii. 20, how much greater must the power of a legion of angels be ! How unconceivably superior the power of all those numbers of spiritual natures, which are the excellent works of God ! Now if all this particular power which is in every angel distinct were compacted in one angel, how would it exceed our understanding, and be above our power to form a distinct conception of it ! What is thus divided in every angel must be thought united in the Creator of angels, and far more excellent in him. Everything is in a more noble manner in the fountain than in the streams which distil and descend from it. He that is the original of all those distinct powers must be the seat of all power without distinction. In him is the union of all without division ; what is in them as a quality is in him as an essence. Again, if all the powers of several creatures, with all their spiritual qualities and vigours, both of beasts, plants, and rational creatures, were united in one subject ; as if one lion had the strength of all the lions that ever were, or if one elephant had the strength of all the elephants that ever were, nay, if one bee had all the power of motion and stinging that all bees ever had, it would have a vast strength ; but if the strength of all those thus gathered into one of every kind should be lodged in one sole creature, one man, would it not be a strength too big for our conception ! Or suppose one cannon had all the force of all the cannons that ever were in the world, what a battery would it make, and, as it were, shake the whole frame of heaven and earth ! All this strength must be much more incomprehensible in God, all is united in him. If it were in one individual created nature, it would still be but a finite power in a finite nature ; but in God it is infinite and immense.

Reason. 2. If there were not an incomprehensible power in God, he would

not be infinitely perfect God is the first being. It can only be said of him, *Est*, he is. All other things are nothing to him, 'less than nothing, and vanity,' Isa. xl. 17, and 'reputed as nothing,' Dan. iv. 35. All the inhabitants of the earth, with all their wit and strength, are counted as if they were not, just in comparison with him and his being as a little mote in the sunbeams; God therefore is a pure being. Any kind of weakness whatsoever is a defect, a degree of not being; so far as anything wants this or that power, it may be said not to be. Were there anything of weakness in God, any want of strength which belonged to the perfection of a nature, it might be said of God, He is not this or that, he wants this or that perfection of being, and so he would not be a pure being, there would be something of not being in him. But God being the first being, the only original being, he is infinitely distant from not being, and therefore infinitely distant from anything of weakness.

Again, if God can know whatsoever is possible to be done by him and cannot do it, there would be something more in his knowledge than in his power.* What would then follow? That the essence of God would be in some regard greater than itself and less than itself, because his knowledge and his power are his essence, his power as much his essence as his knowledge; and therefore, in regard of his knowledge his essence would be greater, in regard of his power his essence would be less, which is a thing impossible to be conceived in a most perfect being. We must understand this of those things which are properly and in their own nature subjected to the divine knowledge, for otherwise God knows more than he can do; for he knows sin, but he cannot act it, because sin belongs not to power, but weakness, and sin comes under the knowledge of God, not in itself and its own nature, but as it is a defect from God and contrary to good, which is the proper object of divine knowledge. He knows it also not as possible to be done by himself, but as possible to be done by the creature. Again, if God were not omnipotent, we might imagine something more perfect than God; for if we bar God from any one thing which in its own nature is possible, we may imagine a being that can do that thing, one that is able to effect it, and so imagine an agent greater than God, a being able to do more than God is able to do, and consequently a being more perfect than God; but no being more perfect than God can be imagined by any creature.† Nothing can be called most perfect, if anything of activity be wanting to it. Active power follows the perfection of a thing, and all things are counted more noble, by how much more of efficacy and virtue they possess. We count those the best and most perfect plants that have the greatest medicinal virtue in them, and power of working upon the body for the cure of distempers. God is perfect of himself, and therefore most powerful of himself. If his perfection in wisdom and goodness be unsearchable, his power, which belongs to perfection, and without which all the other excellencies of his nature were insignificant, and could not shew themselves (as was before evidenced), must be unsearchable also. It is by the title of *Almighty* he is denominated, when declared to be unsearchable to perfection: Job xi. 7, 'Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?' This would be limited and searched out, if he were destitute of an active ability to do whatsoever he pleased to do, whatsoever was possible to be done. As he hath not a perfect liberty of will, if he could not will what he pleased, so he would not have a perfect activity, if he could not do what he willed.

Reason 3. The simplicity of God manifests it. Every substance, the more

* Victorin. in Petav. tom. i. p. 333.

† Ibid. p. 233.

spiritual it is, the more powerful it is. All perfections are more united in a simple, than in a compounded being. Angels being spirits, are more powerful than bodies. Where there is the greatest simplicity, there is the greatest unity; and where there is the greatest unity, there is the greatest power. Where there is a composition of a faculty and a member, the member or organ may be weakened and rendered unable to act, though the power doth still reside in the faculty. As a man, when his arm or hand is cut off or broke, he hath the faculty of motion still; but he hath lost that instrument, that part whereby he did manifest and put forth that motion; but God being a pure spiritual nature, hath no members, no organs to be defaced or impaired. All impediments of action arise either from the nature of the thing that acts, or from something without it. There can be no hindrance to God to do whatsoever he pleases; not in himself, because he is the most simple being, hath no contrariety in himself, is not composed of diverse things. And it cannot be from anything without himself, because nothing is equal to him, much less superior. He is the greatest, the supreme. All things were made by him, depend upon him, nothing can disappoint his intentions.

Reason 4. The miracles that have been in the world evidence the power of God. Extraordinary productions have awakened men from their stupidity, to the acknowledgment of the immensity of divine power. Miracles are such effects as have been wrought without the assistance and co-operation of natural causes, yea, contrary, and besides the ordinary course of nature, above the reach of any created power. Miracles have been; and saith Bradwardine,* to deny that ever such things were, is uncivil; it is inhuman to deny all the histories of Jews and Christians. Whosoever denies miracles, must deny all possibility of miracles, and so must imagine himself fully skilled in the extent of divine power. How was the sun suspended from its motion for some hours, Joshua x. 13; the dead raised from the grave; those reduced from the brink of it, that had been brought near to it by prevailing diseases; and this by a word speaking! How were the famished lions bridled from exercising their rage upon Daniel, exposed to them for a prey, Dan. vi. 22; the activity of the fire curbed for the preservation of the three children! Dan. iii. 15. Which proves a Deity more powerful than all creatures. No power upon earth can hinder the operation of the fire upon combustible matter, when they are united, unless by quenching the fire, or removing the matter. But no created power can restrain the fire, so long as it remains so, from acting according to its nature. This was done by God in the case of the three children, and that of the burning bush, Exod. iii. 2. It was as much miraculous that the bush should not consume, as it was natural that it should burn by the efficacy of the fire upon it. No element is so obstinate and deaf, but it hears and obeys his voice, and performs his orders, though contrary to its own nature. All the violence of the creature is suspended as soon as it receives his command. He that gave the original to nature, can take away the necessity of nature.† He presides over creatures, but is not confined to those laws he hath prescribed to creatures. He framed nature, and can turn the channels of nature according to his own pleasure. Men dig into the bowels of nature, search into all the treasures of it, to find medicines to cure a disease, and after all their attempts it may prove labour in vain. But God, by one act of his will, one word of his mouth, overturns the victory of death, and rescues from the most desperate diseases.‡ All the miracles which were wrought by the apostles, either speaking some words, or touching with the

* Lib. i. cap. i. p. 38. † Damianus in Petav. ‡ Fauch. in Acts, vol. ii. sec 56.

hand, were not effected by any virtue inherent in their words, or in their touches. For such virtue inherent in any created finite subject would be created and finite in itself, and consequently were incapable to produce effects, which require an infinite virtue, as miracles do, which are above the power of nature. So when our Saviour wrought miracles, it was not by any quality resident in his human nature, but by the sole power of his divinity. The flesh could only do what was proper to the flesh; but the Deity did what was proper to the Deity. God 'alone doth wonders,' Ps. cxxxvi. 4, excluding every other cause from producing such things. He only doth those things which are above the power of nature, and cannot be wrought by any natural causes whatsoever. He doth not hereby put his omnipotence to any stress. It is as easy with him to turn nature out of its settled course, as it was to place it in that station it holds, and appoint it that course it runs. All the works of nature are indeed miracles, and testimonies of the power of God producing them, and sustaining them; but works above the power of nature, being novelties and unusual, strike men with a greater admiration upon their appearance, because they are not the products of nature, but the convulsions of it.

I might also add as an argument, the power of the mind of man to conceive more than hath been wrought by God in the world; and God can work whatsoever perfection the mind of man can conceive, otherwise the reaches of a created imagination and fancy would be more extensive than the power of God. His power, therefore, is far greater than the conception of any intellectual creature; else the creature would be of a greater capacity to conceive than God is to effect. The creature would have a power of conception above God's power of activity, and consequently a creature in some respect greater than himself. Now, whatsoever a creature can conceive possible to be done, is but finite in its own nature; and if God could not produce what being a created understanding can conceive possible to be done, he would be less than infinite in power, nay, he could not go to the extent of what is finite; but I have touched this before, that God can create more than he hath created, and in a more perfect way of being, as considered simply in themselves.

III. The third general thing is to declare how the power of God appears in creation, in government, in redemption.

1. In creation. With what majestic lines doth God set forth his power, in the giving being, and endowments to all the creatures in the world, Job xxxviii. All that is in heaven and earth is his, and shews the greatness of his 'power, glory, victory, and majesty,' 1 Chron. xxix. 11. The heaven being so magnificent a piece of work, is called emphatically, 'the firmament of his power,' Ps. cl. 1; his power being more conspicuous and unveiled in that glorious arch of the world. Indeed, 'God exalts by his power,' Job xxxvi. 22, that is, exalts himself by his power in all the works of his hands; in the smallest shrub as well the most glorious sun. All his works of nature are truly miracles, though we consider them not, being blinded with too frequent and customary a sight of them; yet in the neglect of all the rest, the view of the heavens doth more affect us with astonishment at the might of God's arm. These 'declare his glory, and the firmament shews his handiwork,' Ps. xix. 1; and the psalmist peculiarly calls them 'his heavens,' and 'the work of his fingers,' Ps. viii. 3. These were immediately created by God, whereas many other things in the world were brought into being by the power of God, yet by the means of the influence of the heavens.

(1.) His power is the first thing evident in the story of the creation. 'In

the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,' Gen. i. 1. There is no appearance of anything in this declaratory preface, but of power. The characters of wisdom march after, in the distinct formation of things, and animating them with suitable qualities for an universal good. By heaven and earth is meant the whole mass of the creatures: by heaven, all the airy region, with all the host of it; by the earth is meant all that which makes the entire inferior globe.* The Jews observe, that in the first of Genesis, in the whole chapter unto the finishing the work in six days, God is called אֱלֹהִים, which is a name of power, and that thirty-two times in that chapter; but after finishing the six days' work, he is called הָאֱלֹהִים, which according to their notion is a name of goodness and kindness. His power is first visible in framing the world, before his goodness is visible in the sustaining and preserving it. It was by this name of Power and Almighty that he was known in the first ages of the world, not by his name *Jehovah*: Exod. vi. 3, 'And I appeared unto Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, by the name of God Almighty; but by my name *Jehovah* was I not known to them.' Not but that they were acquainted with the name, but did not experience the intent of the name, which signified his truth in the performance of his promises. They knew him by that name as promising, but they knew him not by that name as performing. He would be known by his name *Jehovah*, true to his word, when he was about to effect the deliverance from Egypt; a type of the eternal redemption, wherein the truth of God, in performing of his first promise, is gloriously magnified. And hence it is that God is called *Almighty* more in the book of Job, than in all the Scripture besides, I think about thirty-two times, and *Jehovah* but once, which is Job xii. 9, unless in Job xxxviii., when God is introduced speaking himself, which is an argument of Job's living before the deliverance from Egypt, when God was known more by his works of creation, than by the performance of his promises, before the name *Jehovah* was formally published. Indeed, this attribute of his eternal power is the first thing visible and intelligible upon the first glance of the eye upon the creatures, Rom. i. 20. Bring a man out of the cave where he hath been nursed, without seeing anything out of the confines of it, and and let him lift up his eyes to the heavens, and take a prospect of that glorious body the sun, then cast them down to the earth, and behold the surface of it with its green clothing, the first notion which will start up in his mind from that spring of wonders is that of power, which he will first adore with a religious astonishment. The wisdom of God in them is not so presently apparent, till after a more exquisite consideration of his works, and knowledge of the properties of their natures, the conveniency of their situations, and the usefulness of their functions, and the order wherein they are linked together for the good of the universe.

(2.) By this creative power God is often distinguished from all the idols and false gods in the world; and by this title he sets forth himself when he would act any great and wonderful work in the world. 'He is great above all gods;' for 'he hath done whatsoever he pleased in heaven and in earth,' Ps. cxxxv. 5, 6. Upon this is founded all the worship he challengeth in the world, as his peculiar glory: Rev. iv. 11, 'Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, honour, and power: for thou hast created all things;' and Rev. x. 6. 'I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded,' Isa. xlv. 12. What is the issue? Ver. 16, 'They shall be ashamed and confounded, all of them, that are makers of idols.' And the weakness of idols is expressed by this title: 'The gods that have not made the heavens and

* Mercer, p. 7, col. 1, 2.

the earth,' Jer. x. 11. 'The portion of Jacob is not like them: for he is the former of all things,' ver. 16.

What is not that God able to do, that hath created so great a world? How doth the power of God appear in creation?

[1.] In making the world of nothing. When we say the world was made of nothing, we mean, that there was no matter existent for God to work upon, but what he raised himself in the first act of creation. In this regard, the power of God in creation surmounts his power in providence. Creation supposeth nothing, providence supposeth something in being. Creation intimates a creature making, providence speaks a thing already made, and capable of government, and in government. God uses second causes to bring about his purposes.

First, The world was made of nothing. The earth, which is described as the first matter, 'without any form' or ornament, Gen. i. 1, 2, without any distinction or figures, was of God's forming in the bulk, before he did adorn it with his pencil.* God in the beginning creating the heaven and the earth, includes two things: first, that those were created in the beginning of time, and before all other things; secondly, that God begun the creation of the world from those things. Therefore, before the heavens and the earth there was nothing absolutely created, and therefore no matter in being before an act of creation past upon it. It could not be eternal, because nothing can be eternal but God; it must therefore have a beginning. If it had a beginning from itself, then it was before it was. If it acted in the making itself before it was made, then it had a being before it had a being; for that which is nothing can act nothing. The action of anything supposeth the existence of the thing which acts. It being made, it was not before it was made; for to be made is to be brought into being. It was made then by another, and that maker is God. It is necessary that the first original of things was from nothing. When we see one thing to arise from another, we must suppose an original of the first of each kind: as when we see a tree spring up from a seed, we know that seed came out of the bowels of another tree; it had a parent, and it had a matter; we must come to some *first*, or else we run into an endless maze. We must come to some first tree, some first seed that had no cause of the same kind, no matter of it, but was mere nothing. Creation doth suppose a production from nothing; because, if you suppose a thing without any real or actual existence, it is not capable of any other production than from nothing. Nothing must be supposed before the world, or we must suppose it eternal, and that is to deny it to be a creature, and make it God.† The creation of spiritual substances, such as angels and souls, evince this; those things that are purely spiritual, and consist not of matter, cannot pretend to any original from matter, and therefore they rose up from nothing. If spiritual things arose from nothing, much more may corporeal, because they are of a lower nature than spiritual. And he that can create a higher nature of nothing, can create an inferior nature of nothing. As bodily things are more imperfect than spiritual, so their creation may be supposed easier than that of spiritual. There was as little need of any matter to be wrought to his hands, to contrive into this visible fabric, as there was to erect such an excellent order as the glorious cherubims.

Secondly, This creation of things from nothing speaks an infinite power. The distance between nothing and being hath been alway counted so great, that nothing but an infinite power can make such distances meet together; either for nothing to pass into being, or being to return to nothing. To

* Suarez, vol. iii. p. 33.

† Ibid., vol. iii. p. 6.

have a thing arise from nothing, was so difficult a text to those that were ignorant of the Scripture, that they knew not how to fathom it ; and therefore laid it down as a certain rule, that of nothing, nothing is made, which is true of a created power, but not of an uncreated and almighty power. A greater distance cannot be imagined than that which is between nothing and something ; that which hath no being, and that which hath ; and a greater power cannot be imagined than that which brings something out of nothing. We know not how to conceive a nothing, and afterwards a being from that nothing ; but we must remain swallowed up in admiration of the cause that gives it being, and acknowledge it to be without any bounds and measures of greatness and power.* The further anything is from being, the more immense must that power be which brings it into being. It is not conceivable that the power of all the angels in one can give being to the smallest spire of grass. To imagine, therefore, so small a thing as a bee, a fly, a grain of corn, or an atom of dust, to be made of nothing, would stupify any creature in the consideration of it ; much more to behold the heavens with all the troop of stars, the earth with all its embroidery, and the sea with all her inhabitants of fish ; and man, the noblest creature of all, to arise out of the womb of mere emptiness. Indeed, God had not acted as an almighty Creator if he had stood in need of any materials but of his own framing. It had been as much as his deity was worth, if he had not had all within the compass of his own power that was necessary to operation ; if he must have been beholden to something without himself, and above himself, for matter to work upon. Had there been such a necessity, we could not have imagined him to be omnipotent, and consequently not God.

Thirdly, In this the power of God exceeds the power of all natural and rational agents. Nature, or the order of second causes, hath a vast power. The sun generates flies and other insects ; but of some matter, the slime of the earth or a dunghill. The sun and the earth bring forth harvests of corn, but from seed first sown in the earth : fruits are brought forth, but from the sap of the plant. Were there no seed or plants in the earth, the power of the earth would be idle, and the influence of the sun insignificant ; whatsoever strength either of them had in their nature must be useless without matter to work upon. All the united strength of nature cannot produce the least thing out of nothing. It may multiply and increase things, by the powerful blessing God gave it at the first erecting of the world, but it cannot create. The word which signifies creation, used in Gen. i. 1, is not ascribed to any second cause, but only to God ; a word in that sense is incommunicable to anything else, as the action it signifies.

Rational creatures can produce admirable pieces of art from small things, yet still out of matter created to their hands ; excellent garments may be woven, but from the entrails of a small silk-worm ; delightful and medicinal spirits and essences may be extracted by ingenious chemists, but out of the bodies of plants and minerals. No picture can be drawn without colours ; no statue engraven without stone ; no building erected without timber, stones, and other materials ; nor can any man raise a thought without some matter framed to his hands, or cast into him. Matter is by nature formed to the hands of all artificers ; they bestow a new figure upon it, by the help of instruments, and the product of their own wit and skill, but they create not the least particle of matter ; when they want it, they must be supplied, or else stand still, as well as nature ; for none of them, or all together, can make the least mite or atom ; and when they have wrought all that they can, they will not want some to find a flaw and defect in their work. God,

* Amyrald, Morale, tom. i. p. 252.

as a creator, hath the only prerogative to draw what he pleases from nothing, without any defect, without any imperfection. He can raise what matter he please, ennoble it with what form he pleases. Of nothing, nothing can be made by any created agent; but the omnipotent architect of the world is not under the same necessity, nor is limited to the same rule, and tied by so short a tether as created nature, or an ingenious yet feeble artificer.

[2.] It appears in raising such variety of creatures from this barren womb of nothing, or from the matter which he first commanded to appear out of nothing. Had there been any pre-existent matter, yet the bringing forth such varieties and diversities of excellent creatures, some with life, some with sense, and others with reason superadded to the rest, and those out of indisposed and undigested matter, would argue an infinite power resident in the first author of this variegated fabric. From this matter he formed that glorious sun, which every day displays its glory, scatters its beams, clears the air, ripens our fruits, and maintains the propagation of creatures in the world. From this matter he lighted those torches which he set in the heaven to qualify the darkness of the night. From this he compacted those bodies of light, which though they seem to us as little sparks, as if they were the glow-worms of heaven, yet some of them exceed in greatness this globe of the earth on which we live; and the highest of them hath so quick a motion, that some tell us they run in the space of every hour forty-two millions of leagues. From the same matter he drew the earth on which we walk; from thence he extracted the flowers to adorn it, the hills to secure the valleys, and the rocks to fortify it against the inundations of the sea. And on this dull and sluggish element he bestowed so great a fruitfulness to maintain, feed, and multiply so many seeds of different kinds, and conferred upon those little bodies of seeds a power to multiply their kinds, in conjunction with the fruitfulness of the earth, to many thousands. From this rude matter, the slime or dust of the earth, he kneaded the body of man, and wrought so curious a fabric, fit to entertain a soul of a heavenly extraction, formed by the breath of God, Gen. ii. 7. He brought light out of thick darkness, and living creatures, fish and fowl, out of inanimate waters, Gen. i. 20, and gave a power of spontaneous motion to things arising from that matter which had no living motion. To convert one thing into another is an evidence of infinite power, as well as creating things of nothing; for the distance between life and not life is next to that which is between being and not being. God first forms matter out of nothing, and then draws upon and from this indisposed chaos many excellent portraitures. Neither earth nor sea were capable of producing living creatures, without an infinite power working upon it, and bringing into it such variety and multitude of forms, and this is called by some mediate creation; as the producing the chaos, which was without form and void, is called immediate creation. Is not the power of the potter admirable in forming out of tempered clay such varieties of neat and curious vessels, that, after they are fashioned, and passed the furnace, look as if they were not of any kin to the matter they are formed of? And is it not the same with the glass-maker, that from a little melted jelly of sand and ashes, or the dust of flint, can blow up so pure a body as glass, and in such varieties of shapes? And is not the power of God more admirable, because infinite in speaking out so beautiful a world out of nothing, and such varieties of living creatures from matter utterly indisposed in its own nature form such forms?

[3.] And this conducts to a third thing, wherein the power of God appears, in that he did all this with the greatest ease and facility.

First, Without instruments. As God made the world without the advice,

so without the assistance of any other. 'He stretched forth the heavens alone, and spread abroad the earth by himself,' Isa. xlv. 24. He had no engine but his word, no pattern or model but himself. What need can he have of instruments, that is able to create what instruments he pleases? Where there is no resistance in the object, where no need of preparation or instrumental advantage in the agent, there the actual determination of the will is sufficient to a reproduction. What instrument need we to the thinking of a thought or an act of our will? Men indeed cannot act anything without tools; the best artificer must be beholden to something else for his noblest works of art. The carpenter cannot work without his rule, and axe, and saw, and other instruments. The watchmaker cannot act without his file and pliers. But in creation there is nothing necessary to God's bringing forth a world but a simple act of his will, which is both the principal cause and instrumental. He had no scaffolds to rear it, no engines to polish it, no hammers or mattocks to clod and work it together. It is a miserable error to measure the actions of an infinite cause by the imperfect model of a finite, since by his own power and outstretched arm he made the heaven and the earth, Jer. xxxii. 17. What excellency would God have in his work above others, if he needed instruments, as feeble men do? Every artificer is counted more admirable that can frame curious works with the less matter, fewer tools and assistances. God uses instruments in his works of providence, not for necessity, but for the display of his wisdom in the management of them; yet those instruments were originally framed by him without instruments. Indeed, some of the Jews thought the angels were the instruments of God in creating man, and that those words, Gen. i. 26, 'Let us make man in our own image,' were spoken to angels. But certainly the Scripture, which denies God any counsellor in the model of creation, Isa. xl. 12-14, doth not join any instrument with him in the operation, which is everywhere ascribed to himself without created assistance, Isa. xlv. 18. It was not to angels God spake in that affair; if so, man was made after the image of angels, if they were companions with God in that work; but it is everywhere said that man was made after the image of God, Gen. i. 27. Again, the image wherein man was created was that of dominion over the lower creatures, as appears ver. 26, which we find not conferred upon angels; and it is not likely that Moses should introduce the angels as God's privy council, of whose creation he had not mentioned one syllable. 'Let us make man' rather signifies the Trinity, and not spoken in a royal style, as some think. Which of the Jewish kings writ in the style *we*? That was the custom of later times; and we must not measure the language of Scripture by the style of Europe, of a far later date than the penning the history of the creation. If angels were his counsellors in the creation of the material world, what instrument had he in the creation of angels? If his own wisdom were the director, and his own will the producer of the one, why should we not think that he acted by his sole power in the other? It is concluded by most, that the power of creation cannot be derived to any creature, it being a work of omnipotency. The drawing something out from nothing cannot be communicated, without a communication of the Deity itself. The educing things from nothing exceeds the capacity of any creature, and the creature is of too feeble a nature to be elevated to so high a degree. It is very unreasonable to think that God needed any such aid. If an instrument were necessary for God to create the world, then he could not do it without that instrument. If he could not, he were not then all-sufficient in himself, if he depended upon anything

without himself for the production or consummation of his works. And it might be inquired how that instrument came into being. If it begun to be, and there was a time when it was not, it must have its being from the power of God; and then, why could not God as well create all things without an instrument, as create that instrument without an instrument? For there was no more power necessary to a producing the whole without instruments, than to produce one creature without an instrument.

No creature can in its own nature be an instrument of creation. If any such instrument were used by God, it must be elevated in a miraculous and supernatural way; and what is so an instrument, is in effect no instrument; for it works nothing by its own nature, but from an elevation of a superior nature, and beyond its own nature. All the power in the instrument is truly the power of God, and not the power of the instrument. And therefore what God doth by an instrument he could do as well without. If you should see one apply a straw to iron for the cutting of it, and effect it, you would not call the straw an instrument in that action, because there was nothing in the nature of the straw to do it. It was done wholly by some other force, which might have done it as well without the straw as with it. The narrative of the creation in Genesis removes any instrument from God. The plants which are preserved and propagated by the influence of the sun were created the day before the sun, viz., on the third day, whereas the light was collected into the body of the sun on the fourth day, Gen. i. 11, 16, to shew, that though the plants do instrumentally owe their yearly beauty and preservation to the sun, yet they did not in any manner owe their creation to the instrumental heat and vigour of it.

Secondly, God created the world by a word, by a simple act of his will. The whole creation is wrought by a word: 'God said, Let there be light;' and 'God said, Let there be a firmament,' Gen. i. 3, 5, &c., throughout the whole chapter. Not that we should understand it of a sensible word, but to express the easiness of this operation of God, as easy as a word to man. We must understand it of a powerful order of his own will, which is expressed by the Psalmist in the nature of a command: Ps. xxxiii. 6, 'He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast;' and Ps. cxlviii. 5, 'He commanded, and they were created.' At the same instant that he willed them to stand forth, they did stand forth. The efficacious command of the Creator was the original of all things; the insensibility of nothing obeyed the act of his will. Creation is therefore entitled a calling: Rom. iv. 17, 'He calls those things which are not as if they were.' To create is no more with God than to call; and what he calls presents itself before him in the same posture that he calls it. He did with more ease make a world than we can form a thought. It is the same ease to him to create worlds as to decree them. There needs no more than a resolve to have things wrought at such a time, and they will be, according to his pleasure. This will is his power. 'Let there be light' is the precept of his will, and 'there was light' is the effect of his precept. By a word was the matter of the heavens and the earth framed; by a word things separate themselves from the rude mass into their proper forms; by a word light associates itself into one body and forms a sun; by a word are the heavens, as it were, bespangled with stars, and the earth dressed with flowers; by a word is the world both ceiled and floored. One act of his will formed the world and perfected its beauty. All the variety and several exploits of his power were not caused by distinct words or acts of power. God uttered not distinct words for distinct species, as, let there be an elephant, and let there be a lion; but as he produced those various creatures out of one

matter, so by one word. By one single command, those varieties of creatures, with their clothing, ornaments, distinct notes, qualities, functions, were brought forth. By one word all the seeds of the earth, with their various virtues; by one word, all the fish of the sea, and fowls of the air in their distinct natures, instincts, colours; by one word all the beasts of the field, with their varieties, Gen. i. 11, 20, 24. Heaven and earth, spiritual and corporeal creatures, mortal and immortal, the greater and the less, visible and invisible, were formed with the same ease. A word made the least, and a word made the greatest.* It is as little difficulty to him to produce the highest angel as the lightest atom. It is enough for the existence of the stateliest cherubim for God only to will his being; it was enough for the forming and fixing the sun to will the compacting of light into one body. The creation of the soul of man is expressed by inspiration, Gen. ii. 7, to shew that it is as easy with God to create a rational soul as for man to breathe.† Breathing is natural to man by a communication of God's goodness; and the creation of the soul is as easy to God by virtue of his almighty word. As there was no proportion between nothing and being, so there was as little proportion between a word and such glorious effects. A mere voice, coming from an omnipotent will, was capable to produce such varieties, which angels and men have seen in all ages of the world, and this without weariness. What labour is there in willing, what pain could there be in speaking a word? Isa. xl. 28, 'The Creator of the ends of the earth is not weary.' And though he be said to rest after the creation, it is to be meant a rest from work, not a repose from weariness. So great is the power of God, that without any matter, without any instruments, he could create many worlds, and with the same ease as he made this.

[4.] I might add also, the appearance of this power in the instantaneous production of things. The ending of his word was not only the beginning, but the perfection of everything he spake into being; not several words to several parts and members, but one word, one breath of his mouth, one act of his will to the whole species of the creatures, and to every member of each individual. Heaven and earth were created in a moment, six days went to their disposal, and that comely order we observe in the world was the work of a week; the matter was formed as soon as God had spoken the word, and in every part of the creation, as soon as God spake the word, 'Let it be so,' the answer immediately is, 'It was so,' which notes the present standing up of the creature according to the act of his will. And therefore,‡ one observes, that *Let there be light*, and *there was light*, in the Hebrew are the same words, without any alteration of letter or point, only the conjunctive particle added, *יְהי אֹר וַיְהי אֹר*, Let there be light, and let there be light, to shew that the same instant of the speaking of the divine word was the appearance of the creature, so great was the authority of his will.

2. We are to shew God's power in the government of the world. As God decreed from eternity the creation of things in time, so he decreed from eternity the particular ends of creatures, and their operations respecting those ends. Now as there was need of his power to execute his decree of creation, there is also need of his power to execute his decree about the manner of government. All government is an act of the understanding, will, and power.§ Prudence to design belongs to the understanding, the election of the means belongs to the will, and the accomplishment of the whole is an act of power. It is a hard matter to determine which is most necessary. Wisdom stands in as much need of power to perfect, as power doth of wisdom, to model and draw out a scheme; though wisdom

* August. † Theodoret. ‡ Pears., p. 111. § Suarez., vol. i. lib. iii. cap. x.

directs, power must effect. Wisdom and power are distinct things among men. A poor man in a cottage may have more prudence to advise than a privy councillor, and a prince more power to act than wisdom to conduct. A pilot may direct, though he be lame, and cannot climb the masts and spread the sails. But God is wanting in nothing; neither in wisdom to design, nor in will to determine, nor in power to accomplish. His wisdom is not feeble, nor his power foolish. A powerful wisdom could not act what it would, and a foolish power would act more than it should. The power expressed in his government is shadowed forth in the living creatures, which are God's instruments in it. It is said, Ezek. i. 10, 'Every one of them had four faces:' that of a man to signify wisdom; of a lion, eagle, the strongest among birds, to signify their courage and strength to perform their offices.

This power is evident in the natural, moral, gracious government.

There is a natural providence, which consists in the preservation of all things, propagation of them by corruptions and generations, and in a co-operation with them in their motions to attain their ends.

Moral government is of the hearts and actions of men.

Gracious government, as respecting the church.

(1.) His power is evident in natural government.

[1.] In preservation. God is the great Father of the world, to nourish it as well as create it.* Man and beast would perish if there were not herbs for their food, and herbs would wither and perish if the earth were not watered with fruitful showers. This some of the heathens acknowledged in their worshipping God under the image of an ox, a useful creature, by reason of its strength, to which we owe so much of our food in corn. Hence God is styled the 'preserver of man and beast,' Ps. xxxvi. 6. Hence the Jews called God *place*, בִּקְיָם, because he is the subsistence of all things. By the same word whereby he gave being to things, he gives to them continuance and duration in being to such a term of time. As they were created by his word, they are supported by his word, Heb. i. 3. The same powerful *fiat*, Gen. i. 11, 'Let the earth bring forth grass,' when the plants peeped upon man† out of nothing, is expressed every spring, when they begin to lift up their heads from their naked roots and winter graves. The resurrection of light every morning, the reviving the pleasure of all things to the eye, the watering the valleys from the mountain springs, the curbing the natural appetite of the waters from covering the earth, every draught that the beasts drink, every lodging the fowls have, every bit of food for the sustenance of man and beast, is ascribed to the 'opening of his hand,' the diffusing of his power, Ps. civ. 27, &c., as much as the first creation of things, and endowing them with their particular nature; whence the plants which are so serviceable are called, ver. 16, the 'trees of the Lord,' of Jehovah, that hath only being and power in himself. The whole psalm is but the description of his preserving, as the first of Genesis is of his creating power. It is by this power angels have so many thousand years remained in the power of understanding and willing. By this power things distant in their natures have been joined together, a spiritual soul and a dusty body knit in a marriage knot; by this power the heavenly bodies have for so many ages rolled in their spheres, and the tumultuous elements have persisted in their order; by this hath the matter of the world been to this day continued, and as capable of entertaining forms as it was at the first creation. What an amazing sight would it be to see a man hold a pillar of the exchange upon one of his fingers! What is this to the power of God, who 'holds the waters in the hollow of

* Daille in 1 Cor. x. p. 102.

† Qu. 'the earth'?—Ed

his hands, metes out the heaven with a span, and weighs the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance' ? Isa. xl. 12.

The preserving the earth from the violence of the sea is a plain instance of this power.* How is that raging element kept pent withing those lists where he first lodged it, continuing its course in its channel without overflowing the earth, and dashing in pieces the lower part of the creation ! The natural situation of the water is to be above the earth, because it is lighter, and to be immediately under the air, because it is heavier than that thinner element. Who restrains this natural quality of it, but that God that first formed it ? The word of command at first, 'Hitherto shalt thou go, and no further,' keeps those waters linked together in their den, that they may not ravage the earth, but be useful to the inhabitants of it. And when once it finds a gap to enter, what power of earth can hinder its passage ? How fruitless sometimes is all the art of man to send it to its proper channel, when once it hath spread its mighty waves over some countries, and trampled part of the inhabited earth under its feet ! It hath triumphed in its victory, and withstood all the power of man to conquer its force. It is only the power of God that doth bridle it from spreading itself over the whole earth. And that his power might be more manifest, he hath set but a weak and small bank against it. Though he hath bounded it in some places by mighty rocks, which lift up their heads above it, yet in most places by feeble sand. How often is it seen in every stormy motion, when the waves boil high, and roll furiously, as if they would swallow up all the neighbouring houses upon the shore ; when they come to touch those sandy limits they bow their heads, fall flat, and sink into the lap whence they were raised, and seem to foam with anger that they can march no further, but must spit themselves at so weak an obstacle ! Can the sand be thought to be the cause of this ? The weakness of it gives no footing to such a thought. Who can apprehend that an enraged army should retire upon the opposition of a straw in an infant's hand ? Is it the nature of the water ? Its retirement is against the natural quality of it ; pour but a little upon the ground, and you always see it spread itself. No cause can be rendered in nature ; it is a standing monument of the power of God in the preservation of the world, and ought to be more taken notice of by us in this island, surrounded with it, than by some other countries in the world.

First, We find nothing hath power to preserve itself. Doth not every creature upon earth require the assistance of some other for its maintenance ? 'Can the rush grow up without mire ; can the flag grow up without water ?' Job viii. 11. Can man or beast maintain itself without grain from the bowels of the earth ? Would not every man tumble into the grave without the aid of other creatures to nourish him ? Whence do these creatures receive that virtue of supplying him nourishment, but from the sun and earth, and whence do they derive that virtue, but from the Creator of all things ? And should he but slack his hand, how soon would they and all their qualities perish, and the lines of the world fall in pieces, and dash one another into their first chaos and confusion ! All creatures indeed have an appetite to preserve themselves, they have some knowledge of the outward means for their preservation, so have irrational animals a natural instinct, as well as men have some skill to avoid things that are hurtful, and apply things that are helpful. But what thing in the world can preserve itself by an inward influx into its own being ? All things want such a power without God's *fiat*, 'Let it be so.' Nothing but is destitute of such a power for its own preservation, as much as it is of a power for its own creation. Were

* Daille, Melange, part ii. p. 457, &c.

there any true power for such a work, what need of so many external helps from things of an inferior nature to that which is preserved by them?

¶ No created thing hath a power to preserve any decayed being. Who can lay claim to such a virtue as to recall a withering flower to its former beauty, to raise the head of a drooping plant, or put life into a gasping worm when it is expiring, or put impaired vitals into their former posture? Not a man upon earth, nor an angel in heaven, can pretend to such a virtue; they may be spectators, but not assisters, and are in this case physicians of no value.

Secondly, It is therefore the same power preserves things, which at first created them. The creature doth as much depend upon God in the first instant of its being for its preservation, as it did, when it was nothing, for its production and creation into being. As the continuance of a thought of our mind depends upon the power of our mind, as well as the first framing of that thought.* There is as little difference between creating and preserving power, as there is between the power of mine eye to begin an act of vision and continue that act of vision, as to cast my eye upon an object, and continue it upon that object. As the first act is caused by the eye, so the duration of that act is preserved by the eye; shut the eye, and the act of vision perishes; divert the eye from that object, and that act of vision is exchanged for another. And therefore the preservation of things is commonly called a continual creation. And certainly it is no less, if we understand it of a preservation by an inward influence into the being of things. It is one and the same action invariably continued, and obtaining its force every moment.† The same action whereby he created them of nothing, and which every moment hath a virtue to produce a thing out of nothing, if it were not yet extant in the world, it remains the same without any diminution throughout the whole time wherein anything doth remain in the world. For all things would return to nothing if God did not keep them up in the elevation and state to which he at first raised them by his creative power: Acts xvii. 28, 'In him we live and have our being;' by him, or by the same power whence we derived our being, are our lives maintained. As it was his almighty power whereby we were after we had been nothing, so it is the same power whereby we now are after he hath made us something.

Certainly all things have no less a dependence on God than light upon the sun, which vanisheth and hides its head upon the withdrawing of the sun. And should God suspend that powerful word whereby he erected the frame of the world, it would sink down to what it was before he commanded it to stand up. There needs no new act of power to reduce things to nothing, but the cessation of that omnipotent influx. When the appointed time set them for their being comes to a period, they faint and bend down their heads to their dissolution; they return to their elements, and perish: Ps. civ. 29, 'Thou hidest thy face, and they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust.' That which was nothing cannot remain on this side nothing, but by the same power that first called it out of nothing. As when God withdrew his concurring power from the fire, its quality ceased to act upon the three children, so if he withdraws his sustaining power from the creature, its nature will cease to be.

[2.] It appears in propagation. That powerful word, 'Increase and multiply,' Gen. i. 22, 23, pronounced at the first creation, hath spread itself over every part of the world, every animal in the world, in the formation of every one of them. From two of a kind, how great a number of individua's

* Lessius, de Perfect. Divin. p. 69.

† Lessius, de Sum. Bon. p. 580-582.

and single creatures have been multiplied to cover the face of the earth in their continued successions! What a world of plants spring up from the womb of a dry earth, moistened by the influence of a cloud, and hatched by the beams of the sun! How admirable an instance of his propagating power is it, that from a little seed a massy root should strike into the bowels of the earth, a tall body and thick branches, with leaves and flowers of various colours, should break through the surface of the earth, and mount up towards heaven, when in the seed you neither smell the scent, nor see any firmness of a tree, nor behold any of those colours which you view in the flowers that the years produce, a power not to be imitated by any creature! How astonishing is it that a small seed, whereof many will not amount to the weight of a grain, should spread itself into leaves, bark, fruit of a vast weight, and multiply itself into millions of seeds! What power is that, that from one man and woman hath multiplied families, and from families stocked the world with people! Consider the living creatures, as formed in the womb of their several kinds, every one is a wonder of power. The psalmist instanceth in the forming and propagation of man: Ps. cxxxix. 14, 'I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works.' The forming of the parts distinctly in the womb, and bringing forth into the world every particular member, is a roll of wonders, of power. That so fine a structure as the body of man should be polished 'in the lower parts of the earth,' as he calls the womb, ver. 15, in so short a time, with members of a various form and usefulness, each labouring in their several functions! Can any man give an exact account of the manner 'how the bones do grow in the womb'? Eccles. xi. 5. It is unknown to the father, and no less hid from the mother, and the wisest men cannot search out the depths of it. It is one of the secret works of an omnipotent power; secret in the manner, though open in the effect. So that we must ascribe it to God, as Job doth: 'Thine hands have made me, and fashioned me together round about,' Job x. 8; thy hands, which formed heaven, have formed every part, every member, and wrought me like a mighty workman. The heavens are said to be the work of God's hands, and man is here said to be no less. The forming and propagation of man from that earthly matter is no less a wonder of power than the structure of the world from a rude and indisposed matter. A heathen philosopher descants elegantly upon it: 'Dost thou understand (my son) the forming of man in the womb? Who erected that noble fabric; who carved the eyes, the crystal windows of light, and the conductors of the body; who bored the nostrils and ears, those loop-holes of scents and sounds; who stretched out and knit the sinews and ligaments for the fastening of every member; who cast the hollow veins, the channels of blood; set and strengthened the bones, the pillars and rafters of the body; who digged the pores, the sinks to expel the filth; who made the heart, the repository of the soul, and formed the lungs like a pipe? What mother, what father, wrought these things? No, none but the almighty God, who made all things according to his pleasure. It is he who propagates this noble piece from a pile of dust. Who is born by his own advice; who gives stature, features, sense, wit, strength, speech, but God?'*

It is no less a wonder that a little infant can live so long in a dark sink, in the midst of filth without breathing; and the eduction of it out of the womb is no less a wonder than the forming, increase, nourishment of it in that cell; a wonder that the life of the infant is not the death of the mother, or the life of the mother the death of the infant. This little crea-

* Trismegist. in Serm. Greek in the Temple, p. 57.

ture, when it springs up from such small beginnings by the power of God, grows up to be one of the lords of the world, to have dominion over the creatures, and propagates its kind in the same manner. All this is unaccountable without having recourse to the power of God in the government of the creatures.

And to add to this wonder, consider also what multitudes of formations and births there are at one time all over the world, in every part of which the finger of God is at work; and it will speak an unwearied power. It is admirable in one man, more in a town of men; still more in a greater and larger kingdom, a vaster world. There is a birth for every hour in this city, were but one hundred and sixty-eight born in a week, though the weekly bills mention more. What is this city to three kingdoms, what three kingdoms to a populous world? Eleven* thousand and eighty will make one for every minute in the week; what is this to the weekly propagation in all the nations of the universe, besides the generation of all the living creatures in that space, which are the 'works of God's fingers' as well as man? What will be the result of this but the notion of an unconceivable, unwearied almightiness, always active, always operating?

[3.] It appears in the motions of all creatures. All things 'live and move in him,' Acts xvii. 28, by the same power that creatures have their beings, they have their motions. They have not only a being by his powerful command, but they have their minutely motion by his powerful concurrence. Nothing can act without the almighty influx of God, no more than it can exist without the creative word of God. It is true indeed the ordering of all motions to his holy ends is an act of wisdom, but the motion itself whereby those ends are attained is a work of his power.

First, God as the first cause hath an influence into the motions of all second causes. As all the wheels in a clock are moved in their different motions by the force and strength of the principal and primary wheel, if there be any defect in that, or if that stand still, all the rest languish and stand still the same moment. All creatures are his instruments, his engines, and have no spirit but what he gives and what he assists. Whatsoever nature works, God works in nature; nature is the instrument, God is the supporter, director, mover of nature; that what the prophet saith in another case may be the language of universal nature, 'Lord, thou hast wrought all our works in us,' Isa. xxvi. 12. They are *our* works subjectively, efficiently, as second causes; *God's* works originally, concurrently. The sun moved not in the valley of Ajalon for the space of many hours in the time of Joshua, chap. x. 13; nor did the fire exercise its consuming quality upon the three children in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, Dan. iii. 25. He withdrew not his supporting power from their being, for then they had vanished; but his influencing power from their qualities, whereby their motion ceased, till he returned his influential concurrence to them; which evidenceth, that without a perpetual derivation of divine power the sun could not run one stride or inch of its race, nor the fire devour one grain of light chaff or an inch of straw. Nothing without his sustaining power can continue in being, nothing without his co-working power can exercise one mite of those qualities it is possessed of. All creatures are wound up by him, and his hand is constantly upon them, to keep them in perpetual motion.

Secondly, Consider the variety of motions in a single creature. How many motions are there in the vital parts of a man, or in any other animal which a man knows not, and is unable to number? The renewed motion of the lungs, the *systoles* and *diastoles* of the heart, the contractions and

* 'Ten.'—ED.

dilatations of the heart, whereby it spouts out and takes in blood, the power of concoction in the stomach, the motion of the blood in the veins, &c., all which were not only settled by the powerful hand of God, but are upheld by the same, preserved and influenced in every distinct motion by that power that stamped them with that nature. To every one of those there is not only the sustaining power of God holding up their natures, but the motive power of God concurring to every motion; for, if we move in him as well as we live in him, then every particle of our motion is exercised by his concurring power, as well as every moment of our life supported by his preserving power. What an infinite variety of motions is there in the whole world, in universal nature, to all which God concurs, all which he conducts, even the motions of the meanest as well as the greatest creatures, which demonstrate the indefatigable power of the governor. It is an infinite power which doth act in so many varieties, whereby the soul forms every thought, the tongue speaks every word, the body exerts every action. What an infinite power is that which presides over the birth of all things, concurs with the motion of the sap in the tree, rivers on the earth, clouds in the air, every drop of rain, fleecy of snow, crack of thunder? Not the least motion in the world, but is under an actual influence of this almighty mover.

And lest any should scruple the concurrence of God to so many varieties of the creatures' motion as a thing utterly inconceivable, let them consider the sun, a natural image and shadow of the perfections of God. Doth not the power of that finite creature extend itself to various objects at the same moment of time? How many insects doth it animate, as flies, &c., at the same moment throughout the world! How many several plants doth it erect at its appearance in the spring, whose roots lay mourning in the earth all the foregoing winter! What multitudes of spires of grass, and nobler flowers, doth it midwife in the same hour! It warms the air, melts the blood, cherishes living creatures of various kinds in distinct places, without tiring; and shall the God of this sun be less than his creature?

Thirdly, And since I speak of the sun, consider the power of God in the motion of it. The vastness of the sun is computed to be at the least 166 times bigger than the earth,* and its distance from the earth some tell us to be about four millions of miles,† whence it follows, that it is whirled about the world with that swiftness, that in the space of an hour it runs a million of miles, which is as much as if it should move round about the surface of the earth fifty times in one hour, which vastness exceeds the swiftness of a bullet shot out of a cannon, which is computed to fly not above three miles in a minute, so that the sun runs further in one hour's space, than a bullet can in five thousand if it were kept in motion; so that if it were near the earth, the swiftness of its motion would shatter the whole frame of the world, and dash it in pieces: so that the psalmist may well say: 'It runs a race like a strong man,' Ps. xix. 5. What an incomprehensible power is that which hath communicated such a strength and swiftness to the sun, and doth daily influence its motion, especially since after all those years of its motion, wherein one would think it should have spent itself, we behold it every day as vigorous as Adam did in paradise, without limping, without shattering itself, or losing any thing of its natural spirits in its unwearied motion. How great must that power be, which hath kept this great body so entire, and thus swiftly moves it every day!

Is it not now an argument of omnipotency to keep all the strings of nature

* A Lapide, in i. cap. Gen. 16. Lessius, de perfect. divin. p. 90, 91. Lessius, de Providen. p. 633. Voss. de Idol, lib. ii. cap. ii.

† In reality nearly 96,000,000.—ED.

in tune ; to wind them up to a due pitch for the harmony he intended by them ; to keep things that are contrary from that confusion they would naturally fall into ; to prevent those jarrings which would naturally result from their various and snarling qualities ; to preserve every being in its true nature ; to propagate every kind of creature ; order all the operations, even the meanest of them, when there are such innumerable varieties ?

But let us consider, that this power of preserving things in their station and motion, and the renewing of them, is more stupendous than that which we commonly call miraculous.

We call those miracles which are wrought out of the track of nature, and contrary to the usual stream and current of it, which men wonder at, because they seldom see them and hear of them, as things rarely brought forth in the world, when, the truth is, there is more of power expressed in the ordinary station and motion of natural causes, than in those extraordinary exertings of power. Is not more power signalled in that whirling motion of the sun every hour for so many ages, than in the suspending of its motion one day, as it was in the days of Joshua ? That fire should continually ravage and consume, and greedily swallow up every thing that is offered to it, seems to be the effect of as admirable a power as the stopping of its appetite a few moments, as in the case of the three children. Is not the rising of some small seeds from the ground, with a multiplication of their numerous posterity, an effect of as great a power as our Saviour's feeding many thousands with a few loaves by a secret augmentation of them ?* Is not the chemical producing so pleasant and delicious a fruit as the grape from a dry earth, insipid rain, and a sour vine, as admirable a token of divine power as our Saviour's turning water into wine ? Is not the cure of diseases by the application of a simple inconsiderable weed, or a slight infusion, as wonderful in itself as the cure of it by a powerful word ? What if it be naturally designed to heal ; what is that nature, who gave that nature, who maintains that nature, who conducts it, co-operates with it ? Doth it work of itself, and by its own strength ? Why not then equally in all, in one as well as another ? Miracles indeed affect more, because they testify the immediate operation of God without the concurrence of second causes ; not that there is more of the power of God shining in them than in the other.

(2.) This power is evident in moral government.

[1.] In the restraint of the malicious nature of the devil. Since Satan hath the power of an angel and the malice of a devil, what safety would there be for our persons from destruction, what security for our goods from rifling by this invincible, potent, and envious spirit, if his power were not restrained and his malice curbed by one more mighty than himself ? How much doth he envy God the glory of his creation, and man the use and benefit of it ? How desirous would he be in regard of his passion, how able in regard of his strength and subtilty, to overthrow or infect all worship but what was directed to himself ; to manage all things according to his lusts, turn all things topsy-turvy, plague the world, burn cities, houses, plunder us of the supports of nature, waste kingdoms, &c., if he were not held in a chain as a ravenous lion, or a furious wild horse, by the creator and governor of the world ? What remedy could be used by man against the activity of this unseen and swift spirit ? The world could not subsist under his malice : he would practise the same things upon all, as he did upon Job, when he had got leave from his governor ; turn the swords of men into one another's bowels ; send fire from heaven upon the fruits of the earth, and the cattle intended for the use of man ; raise winds to shake and tear our houses upon

* Faucher, sur Act. vol. ii. p. 47.

our heads ; daub our bodies with scabs and boils, and let all the humours in our blood loose upon us. He that envied Adam in paradise, doth envy us the pleasure of enjoying its outworks ; if we were not destroyed by him, we should live in a continued vexation by spectres and apparitions, affrighting sounds and noise, as some think the Egyptians did in that three days' darkness. He would be alway 'winnowing' us, as he desired to winnow Peter, Luke xxii. 31. But God overmasters his strength, that he cannot move a hair's-breadth beyond his tether ; not only he is unable to touch an upright Job, but to lay his fingers upon one of the unbelieving Gadarenes' forbidden and filthy swine without special licence, Mat. viii. 31. When he is cast out of one place, he 'walks through dry places seeking rest,' Luke ii. 24, new objects for his malicious designs, 'but finding none,' till God lets loose the reins upon him for a new employment. Though Satan's power be great, yet God suffers him not to tempt as much as his diabolical appetite would, but as much as divine wisdom thinks fit, and the divine power tempers the other's active malice and gives the creature victory, where the enemy intended spoil and captivity. How much stronger is God than all the legions of hell, as he that holds a strong man from effecting his purpose testifies more ability than his adversary ! Luke xi. 2. How doth he lock him up for a thousand years in a pound which he cannot leap over, Rev. xx. 2 ; and this restraint is wrought partly by blinding the devil in his designs, partly by denying him concourse to his motion, as he hindered the active quality of the fire upon the three children, by withdrawing his power, which was necessary to the motion of it ; and his power is as necessary for the motion of the devil as for that of any other creature. Sometimes he makes him to confess him against his own interest, as Apollo's oracle confessed.† And though, when the devil was cast out of the possessed person, he publicly owned Christ to be 'the holy one of God,' Mark i. 24, to render him suspected by the people of having commerce with the unclean spirits, yet this he could not do without the leave and permission of God, that the power of Christ in stopping his mouth and imposing silence upon him might be evidenced, and that it reaches to the gates of hell as well as to the quieting of winds and waves. This is a part of the strength as well as the wisdom of God, that 'the deceived and the deceiver are his,' Job xii. 16 : wisdom to defeat, and power to over-rule his most malicious designs to his own glory.

[2.] In the restraint of the natural corruption of men. Since the impetus of original corruptions in the blood conveyed down from Adam to the veins of all his posterity, and universally diffused in all mankind, what wreck and havoc would it make in the world, if it were not suppressed by this divine power, which presides over the hearts of men ! Man is so wretched by nature, that nothing but what is vile and pernicious can drop from him. Man 'drinks iniquity like water,' Job xv. 16, being by nature abominable and filthy. He greedily swallows all matter for iniquity, everything suitable to the mire and poison in his nature, and would sprout it out with all fierceness and insolence. God himself gives us the description of man's nature, Gen. vi. 5, that he hath not one good imagination at any time. And the apostle from the psalmist dilates and comments upon it, Rom. iii. 10, &c. : 'There is none righteous, no not one ; their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness, their feet are swift to shed blood,' &c. This corruption is equal to all, natural to all ; it is not more poisonous or more fierce in one man than in another. The root of all men is the same ; all the branches therefore do equally possess the villanous nature of the root. No child of Adam

† *Cæteros deos aërios esse, &c.*—*Grot. Verit. rel. lib. iv.*

can by natural descent be better than Adam. How fruitful would this loathsome lake be in all kind of steams ! What unbridled licentiousness and headstrong fury would triumph in the world, if the power of God did not interpose itself to lock down the flood-gates of it ? What rooting up of human society would there be ; how would the world be drenched in blood, the number of malefactors be greater than that of apprehenders and punishers ! How would the prints of natural laws be razed out of the heart, if God should leave human nature to itself ! Who can read the first chapter to the Romans, verses 24–29, without acknowledging this truth, where there is a catalogue of those villanies which followed upon God's pulling up the sluices and letting the malignity of their inward corruption have its natural course ? If God did not hold back the fury of man, his garden would be over-run, his vine rooted up, the inclinations of men would hurry them to the worst of wickedness. How great is that power that curbs, bridles, or changes as many headstrong horses at once and every minute, as there are sons of Adam upon the earth ! 'The floods lift up their waves ; the Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea,' Psal. xciii. 3, 4, that doth hush and pen in the turbulent passions of men.

[3.] In the ordering and framing the hearts of men to his own ends. That must be an omnipotent hand that grasps and contains the hearts of all men, the heart of the meanest person as well as of the most towering angel, and turns them as he pleases, and makes them, sometime ignorantly, sometime knowingly, concur to the accomplishment of his own purposes. When the hearts of men are so numerous, their thoughts so various and different from one another, yet he hath a key to those millions of hearts, and with infinite power, guided by as infinite wisdom, he draws them into what channels he pleases for the gaining his own ends. Though the Jews had embued their hands in the blood of our Saviour, and their rage was yet reeking hot against his followers, God bridled their fury in the church's infancy till it had got some strength, and cast a terror upon them by the wonders wrought by the apostles : Acts ii. 43, 'And fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.' Was there not the same reason in the nature of the works our Saviour wrought, to point them to the finger of God and calm their rage ? Yet did not the power of God work upon their passions in those miracles, nor stop the impetuosity of the corruption resident in their hearts. Yet now those who had the boldness to attack the Son of God and nail him to the cross, are frightened at the appearance of twelve unarmed apostles, as the sea seems to be afraid when it approacheth the bounds of the feeble sand. How did God bend the hearts of the Egyptians to the Israelites, and turn them to that point as to lend their most costly vessels, their precious jewels and rich garments, to supply those whom they had just before tyrannically loaded with chains ! Exod. iii. 21, 22. When a great part of an army came upon Jehoshaphat to despatch him into another world, how doth God in a trice touch their hearts, and move them by a secret instinct at once to 'depart from him !' 1 Chron. xviii. 31, as if you should see a numerous sight of birds in a moment turn wing another way by a sudden and joint consent. When he gave Saul a kingdom, he gave him a spirit fit for government, and 'gave him another heart,' 1 Sam. x. 9, and brought the people to submit to his yoke, who a little before wandered about the land upon no nobler employment than the seeking of asses. It is no small remark of the power of God to make a number of strong and discontented persons, and desirous enough of liberty, to bend their necks under the yoke

of government, and submit to the authority of one, and that of their own nature, often weaker and unwise than the most of them, and many times an oppressor and invader of their rights. Upon this account David calls God his fortress, tower, shield, Ps. cxliv. 2, all terms of strength in subduing the people under him. It is the mighty hand of God that links princes and people together in the bands of government. The same hand that assuageth the waves of the sea, suppresseth the tumults of the people.

(3.) It appears in his gracious and judicial government.

[1.] In his gracious government. In the deliverance of his church: he is the 'strength of Israel,' 1 Sam. xv. 29, and hath protected his little flock in the midst of wolves, and maintained their standing when the strongest kingdoms have sunk, and the best jointed states have been broken in pieces; when judgments have ravaged countries and torn up the mighty, as a tempestuous wind hath often done the tallest trees, which seemed to threaten heaven with their tops, and dare the storm with the depth of their roots, when yet the vine and rose-bushes have stood firm, and been seen in their beauty next morning. The state of the church hath outlived the most flourishing monarchies, when there hath been a mighty knot of adversaries against her; when the bulls of Bashan have pushed her, and the whole tribe of the dragon have sharpened their weapons and edged their malice; when the voice was strong, and the hopes high to raze her foundation even with the ground; when hell hath roared; when the wit of the world hath contrived, and the strength of the world hath attempted her ruin; when decrees have been passed against her, and the powers of the world armed for the execution of them; when her friends have drooped and skulked in corners; when there was no eye to pity, and no hand to assist, help hath come from heaven; her enemies have been defeated, kings have brought gifts to her and reared her; tears have been wiped off her cheeks, and her very enemies, by an unseen power, have been forced to court her, whom before they would have devoured quick. The devil and his armies have sneaked into their den, and the church hath triumphed when she hath been upon the brink of the grave. Thus did God send a mighty angel to be the executioner of Sennacherib's army, and the protector of Jerusalem, who run his sword into the hearts of eighty thousand, when they were ready to swallow up his beloved city, 2 Kings xix. 35.

When the knife was at the throats of the Jews in Shushan, by a powerful hand it was turned into the hearts of their enemies, Esther viii. With what outstretched arm were the Israelites freed from the Egyptian yoke? Deut. iv. 34. When Pharaoh had mustered a great army to pursue them, assisted with six hundred chariots of war, the Red Sea obstructed their passage before, and an enraged enemy trod on their rear; when the fearful Israelites despaired of deliverance, and the insolent Egyptian assured himself of his revenge, God stretches out his irresistible arm to defeat the enemy and assist his people; he strikes down the wolves, and preserves the flock. God restrained the Egyptian enmity against the Israelites till they were at the brink of the Red Sea, and then lets them follow their humour and pursue the fugitives, that his power might more gloriously shine forth in the deliverance of the one and the destruction of the other. God might have brought Israel out of Egypt in the time of those kings that had remembered the good service of Joseph to their country, but he leaves them till the reign of a cruel tyrant, suffers them to be slaves, that they might by his sole power be conquerors, which had had no appearance had there been a willing dismission of them at the first summons: Exod. ix. 16, 'In very deed, for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew my power, and that my name might

be declared throughout all the earth.' I have permitted thee to rise up against my people, and keep them in captivity, that thou mightest be an occasion for the manifestation of my power in their rescue; and whilst thou art obstinate to enslave them, I will stretch out my arm to deliver them, and make my name famous among the Gentiles, in the wreck of thee and thy host in the Red Sea. The deliverance of the church hath not been in one age or in one part of the world, but God hath signalized his power in all kingdoms where she hath had a footing. As he hath guided her in all places by one rule, animated her by one spirit, so he hath protected her by the same arm of power.

When the Roman emperors banded all their force against her for about three hundred years, they were further from effecting her ruin at the end than when they first attempted it: the church grew under their sword, and was hatched under the wings of the Roman eagle, which were spread to destroy her. The ark was elevated by the deluge, and the waters of the devil, poured out to drown her, did but slime the earth for a new increase of her. She hath sometime been beaten down, and, like Lazarus, hath seemed to lie in the grave for some days, that the power of God might be more visible in her sudden resurrection, and lifting up her head above the throne of her persecutors.

[2.] In his judicial proceedings. The deluge was no small testimony of his power, in opening the cisterns of heaven, and pulling up the sluices of the sea. He doth but call for the waters of the sea, and they 'pour themselves upon the face of the earth,' Amos ix. 6. In forty days' time, the waters overtopped the highest mountains fifteen cubits, Gen. vii. 17, 19, 20; and by the same power he afterwards reduced the sea to its proper channel, as a roaring lion into its den. A shower of fire from heaven upon Sodom and the cities of the plain, was a signal display of his power, either in creating it on the sudden for the execution of his righteous sentence, or sending down the element of fire, contrary to its nature (which affects ascent), for the punishment of rebels against the light of nature.

How often hath he ruined the most flourishing monarchies, led princes away spoiled, and overthrown the mighty, which Job makes an argument of his strength, Job xii. 13, 14. Troops of unknown people, the Goths and Vandals, broke the Romans, a warlike people, and hurled down all before them. They could not have had the thought to succeed in such an attempt, unless God had given them strength and motion for the executing his judicial vengeance upon the people of his wrath.

How did he evidence his power by daubing the throne of Pharaoh, and his chamber of presence, as well as the houses of his subjects, with the slime of frogs; turning their waters into blood, and their dust into biting lice, Exod. vii. 20, viii. 3; raising his militia of locusts against them; causing a three days' darkness without stopping the motion of the sun; taking off their first-born, the excellency of their strength, in a night, by the stroke of the angel's sword! He takes off the chariot wheels of Pharaoh, and presents him with a destruction where he expected a victory; brings those waves over the heads of him and his host, which stood firm as marble walls for the safety of his people. The sea is made to swallow them up, that durst not by the order of their governor touch the Israelites. It only sprinkled the one as a type of baptism, and drowned the other as an image of hell. Thus he made it both a deliverer and a revenger, the instrument of an offensive and defensive war. 'He brings princes to nothing, and makes the judges of the earth as vanity,' Isa. xl. 23, 24. Great monarchs have by this power been hurled from their thrones, and their sceptres (like

Venice glasses) broken before their faces, and they been advanced that have had the least hopes of grandeur. He hath plucked up cedars by the roots, lopped off the branches, and set a shrub to grow up in the place; dissolved rocks, and established bubbles: Luke i. 52, 'He hath shewed strength with his arm: he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and exalted them of low degree.'

And these things he doth magnify his power in.

First, By ordering the nature of creatures as he pleases; by restraining their force, or guiding their motions. The restraint of the destructive qualities of the creatures argues as great a power as the change of their nature, yea, and a greater. The qualities of creatures may be changed by art and composition, as in the preparing of medicines; but what but a divine power could restrain the operation of the fire from the three children, while it retained its heat and burning quality in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace? The operation was curbed while its nature was preserved. All creatures are called his host, because he marshals and ranks them as an army to serve his purposes: the whole scheme of nature is ready to favour men when God orders it, and ready to punish men when God commissions it. He gave the Red Sea but a check, and it obeyed his voice: Ps. cvi. 9, 'He rebuked the Red Sea also, and it was dried up;' the motion of it ceased, and the waters of it were ranged as defensive walls, to secure the march of his people; and, at the motion of the hand of Moses, the servant of the Lord, the sea recovered its violence, and the walls that were framed came tumbling down upon the Egyptians' heads, Exod. xiv. 27. The Creator of nature is not led by the necessity of nature; he that settled the order of nature can change or restrain the order of nature according to his sovereign pleasure. The most necessary and useful creatures he can use as instruments of his vengeance. Water is necessary to cleanse, and by that he can deface a world; fire is necessary to warm, and by that he can burn a Sodom. From the water he formed the fowl, Gen. i. 21, and by that he dissolves them in the deluge; fire or heat is necessary to the generation of creatures, and by that he ruins the cities of the plain. He orders all as he pleases, to perform every tittle and *punctilio* of his purpose. The sea observed him so exactly that it drowned not one Israelite, nor saved one Egyptian: Ps. cvi. 11, 'There was not one of them left.' And to perfect the Israelites' deliverance, he followed them with testimonies of his power above the strength of nature: when they wanted drink, he orders Moses to strike a rock, and the rock spouts a river, and a channel is formed for it to attend them in their journey; when they wanted bread, he dressed manna for them in the heavens, and sent it to their tables in the desert; when he would declare his strength, he calls to the heavens to pour down righteousness, and to the earth to bring forth salvation, Isa. xlv. 8. Though God had created righteousness or deliverance for the Jews in Babylon, yet he calls to the heavens and the earth to be assistant to the design of Cyrus, whom he had raised for that purpose, as he speaks in the beginning of the chapter, ver. 1-4. As God created man for a supernatural end, and all creatures for man as their immediate end, so he makes them, according to opportunities, subservient to that supernatural end of man, for which he created them. He that spans the heavens with his fist can shoot all creatures, like an arrow, to hit what mark he pleases; he that spread the heavens and the earth by a word, and can, by a word, fold them up more easily than a man can a garment, Heb. i. 12, can order the streams of nature; cannot he work without nature as well as with it, beyond nature, contrary to nature, that can (as it

were) fillip nature with his finger into that nothing whence he drew it? Who can cast down the sun from his throne, clap the distinguished parts of the world together, and make them march in the same order to their confusion as they did in their creation; who can jumble the whole frame together, and by a word dissolve the pillars of the world, and make the fabric lie in a ruinous heap.

Secondly, In effecting his purposes by small means; in making use of the meanest creatures. As the power of God is seen in the creation of the smallest creatures, and assembling so many perfections in the little body of an insect, as an ant or spider, so his power is not less magnified in the use he makes of them. As he magnifies his wisdom by using ignorant instruments, so he exalts his power by employing weak instruments in his service. The meanness and imperfection of the matters sets off the excellency of the workman, so the weakness of the instrument is a foil to the power of the principal agent. When God hath effected things by means in the Scripture, he hath usually brought about his purposes by weak instruments.

Moses, a fugitive from Egypt, and Aaron, a captive in it, are the instruments of the Israelites' deliverance. By the motion of Moses his rod, he works wonders in the court of Pharaoh, and summons up his judgments against him. He brought down Pharaoh's stomach for a while by a squadron of lice and locusts, wherein divine power was more seen than if Moses had brought him to his own articles by a multitude of warlike troops. The fall of the walls of Jericho, by the sound of ram's horns, Josh. vi. 20, was a more glorious character of God's power, than if Joshua had battered it down with an hundred of warlike engines. Thus the great army of the Midianites, which lay as grasshoppers upon the ground, were routed by Gideon at the head of three hundred men; and Goliath, a giant, laid level with the ground by David, a stripling, by the force of a sling; a thousand Philistines despatched out of the world by the jaw-bone of an ass in the hand of Samson. He can master a stout nation by an army of locusts, and render the teeth of those little insects as destructive as the teeth, yea the strongest teeth, the cheek-teeth of a great lion, Joel i. 6, 7. The thunderbolt, which produceth sometimes dreadful effects, is compacted of little atoms which fly in the air, small vapours drawn up by the sun, and mixed with other sulphurous matter and putrefying juice. Nothing is so weak, but his strength can make victorious; nothing so small, but by his power he can accomplish his great ends by it; nothing so vile, but his might can conduct to his glory; and no nation so mighty, but he can waste and enfeeble by the meanest creatures. God is great in power in the greatest things, and not little in the smallest; his power in the minutest creatures, which he uses for his service, surmounts the force of our understanding.

3. The power of God appears in redemption. As our Saviour is called the wisdom of God, so he is called the power of God, 1 Cor. i. 24. The arm of power was lifted up as high as the designs of wisdom were laid deep. As this way of redemption could not be contrived but by an infinite wisdom, so it could not be accomplished but by an infinite power; none but God could shape such a design, and none but God could effect it. The divine power in temporal deliverances and freedom from the slavery of human oppressors veils to that which glitters in redemption, whereby the devil is defeated in his designs, stripped of his spoils, and yoked in his strength; the power of God in creation requires not those degrees of admiration, as in redemption. In creation, the world was erected from nothing; as there was nothing to act, so there was nothing to oppose; no victorious devil was in that to be subdued, no thundering law to be silenced, no death to be con-

quered, no transgression to be pardoned and rooted out, no hell to be shut, no ignominious death upon the cross to be suffered. It had been in the nature of the thing an easier thing to divine power to have created a new world, than repaired a broken and purified a polluted one. This is the most admirable work that ever God brought forth in the world, greater than all the marks of his power in the first creation.

And this will appear,

- (1.) In the person redeeming.
- (2.) In the publication and propagation of the doctrine of redemption.
- (3.) In the application of redemption.
- (1.) In the person redeeming.
- [1.] First, In his conception.

First, He was conceived by the Holy Ghost in the womb of the virgin: Luke i. 35, 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee;' which act is expressed to be the effect of the infinite power of God, and it expresses the supernatural manner of the forming the humanity of our Saviour, and signifies not the divine nature of Christ issuing itself into the womb of the virgin; for the angel refers it to the manner of the operation of the Holy Ghost in the producing the human nature of Christ, and not to the nature assuming that humanity into union with itself. The Holy Ghost, or the third person in the Trinity, overshadowed the virgin, and by a creative act framed the humanity of Christ, and united it to the divinity. It is therefore expressed by a word of the same import with that used Gen. i. 2, 'The Spirit moved upon the face of the waters;' which signifies (as it were) a brooding upon the chaos, shadowing it with his wings, as hens sit upon their eggs to form them and hatch them into animals; or else it is an allusion to the cloud which covered the tent of the congregation, when the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle, Exod. xl. 34. It was not such a creative act as we call immediate, which is a production out of nothing; but a mediate creation, such as God's bringing things into form out of the first matter, which had nothing but an obediential or passive disposition to whatsoever stamp the powerful wisdom of God should imprint upon it. So the substance of the virgin had no active, but only a passive disposition to this work. The matter of the body was earthy, the substance of the virgin; the forming of it was heavenly, the Holy Ghost working upon that matter. And therefore when it is said, Mat. i. 18, that 'she was found with child of the Holy Ghost,' it is to be understood of the efficacy of the Holy Ghost, not of the substance of the Holy Ghost. The matter was natural, but the manner of conceiving was in a supernatural way, above the methods of nature. In reference to the active principle, the Redeemer is called in the prophecy, Isa. iv. 2, 'the Branch of the Lord,' in regard of the divine hand that planted him; in respect to the passive principle, 'the Fruit of the earth,' in regard of the womb that bare him, and therefore said to be 'made of a woman,' Gal. iv. 4. That part of the flesh of the virgin whereof the human nature of Christ was made, was refined and purified from corruption by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost, as a skilful workman separates the dross from the gold. Our Saviour is therefore called 'that holy thing,' Luke i. 35, though born of the virgin. He was necessarily some way to descend from Adam. God indeed might have created his body out of nothing, or have formed it (as he did Adam's) out of the dust of the ground; but had he been thus extraordinarily formed, and not propagated from Adam, though he had been a man like one of us, yet he would not have been of kin to us, because it would not have been a nature derived from Adam, the common

parent of us all. It was therefore necessary to an affinity with us, not only that he should have the same human nature, but that it should flow from the same principle, and be propagated to him.* But now, by this way of producing the humanity of Christ of the substance of the virgin, he was in Adam (say some) corporeally, but not seminally; of the substance of Adam, or a daughter of Adam, but not of the seed of Adam. And so he is of the same nature that had sinned, and so what he did and suffered may be imputed to us, which, had he been created as Adam, could not be claimed in a legal and judicial way.

Secondly, It was not convenient he should be born in the common order of nature, of father and mother, for whosoever is so born is polluted: 'A clean thing cannot be brought out of an unclean,' Job xiv. 4. And our Saviour had been incapable of being a redeemer had he been tainted with the least spot of our nature, but would have stood in need of redemption himself. Besides, it had been inconsistent with the holiness of the divine nature to have assumed a tainted and defiled body. He that was the fountain of blessedness to all nations, was not to be subject to the curse of the law for himself, which he would have been had he been conceived in an ordinary way. He that was to overturn the devil's empire, was not to be any way captive under the devil's power, as a creature under the curse; nor could he be able to break the serpent's head had he been tainted with the serpent's breath.

Again, supposing that almighty God, by his divine power, had so ordered the matter, and so perfectly sanctified an earthly father and mother from all original spot, that the human nature might have been transmitted immaculate to him, as well as the Holy Ghost did purge that part of the flesh of the virgin of which the body of Christ was made; yet it was not convenient that that person that was 'God blessed for ever,' as well as man, partaking of our nature, should have a conception in the same manner as ours, but different, and in some measure conformable to the infinite dignity of his person, which could not have been had not a supernatural power and a divine person been concerned as an active principle in it. Besides, such a birth had not been agreeable to the first promise, which calls him 'the seed of the woman,' Gen. i. 15, not of the man, and so the veracity of God had suffered some detriment. The 'seed of the woman' only is set in opposition to the 'seed of the serpent.'

Thirdly, By this manner of conception the holiness of his nature is secured, and his fitness for his office is assured to us. It is now a pure and unpolluted humanity that is the temple and tabernacle of the divinity. The fulness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily, and dwells in him holily; his humanity is supernaturalised and elevated by the activity of the Holy Ghost, hatching the flesh of the virgin into man, as the chaos into a world. Though we read of some 'sanctified from the womb,' it was not a pure and perfect holiness; it was like the light of fire mixed with smoke, an infused holiness accompanied with a natural taint; but the holiness of the Redeemer by his conception is like the light of the sun, pure and without spot, the Spirit of holiness supplying the place of a father in a way of creation.

His fitness for his office is also assured to us; for being born of the virgin, one of our nature, but conceived by the Spirit, a divine person, the guilt of our sins may be imputed to him because of our nature, without the stain of sin inherent in him; because of his supernatural conception he is capable, as one of kin to us, to bear our curse, without being touched by our taint. By this means our sinful nature is assumed without sin in that nature which

* Amyrald, in Symbol. p. 103, &c.

was assumed by him. Flesh he hath, but not 'sinful flesh,' Rom. viii. 3; real flesh, but not really sinful, only by way of imputation.

Nothing but the power of God is evident in this whole work. By the ordinary laws and course of nature a virgin could not bear a son, nothing but a supernatural and almighty grace could intervene to make so holy and perfect a conjunction. The generation of others, in an ordinary way, is by male and female; but the virgin is overshadowed by the Spirit, and power of the Highest.* Man only is the product of natural generation; this which is born of the virgin is the holy thing, the Son of God. In other generations a rational soul is only united to a material body; but in this, the divine nature is united with the human in one person by an indissoluble union.

[2.] The second act of power in the person redeeming is the union of the two natures, the divine and human. The designing indeed of this was an act of wisdom, but the accomplishing it was an act of power.

First, There is in this redeeming person a union of two natures. He is God and man in one person: Heb. i. 8, 9, 'Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever. God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness,' &c. The Son is called God, having a throne for ever and ever, and the unction speaks him man; the Godhead cannot be anointed, nor hath any fellows. Humanity and divinity are ascribed to him, Rom. i. 3, 4. He was 'of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead.' The divinity and humanity are both prophetically joined: Zech. xii. 10, 'I will pour out my Spirit,'—the pouring forth the Spirit is an act only of divine grace and power,—'and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced;' the same person pours forth the Spirit as God and is pierced as man. 'The Word was made flesh,' John i. 14; Word from eternity was made flesh in time, Word and flesh in one person; a great God and a little infant.

Secondly, The terms of this union were infinitely distant. What greater distance can there be than between the Deity and humanity, between the Creator and a creature? Can you imagine the distance between eternity and time, infinite power and miserable infirmity, an immortal Spirit and dying flesh, the highest being and nothing? Yet these are espoused. A God of unmixed blessedness is linked personally with a man of perpetual sorrows, life incapable to die joined to a body in that economy incapable to live without dying first, infinite purity and a reputed sinner, eternal blessedness with a cursed nature, almightiness and weakness, omniscience and ignorance, immutability and changeableness, incomprehensibleness and comprehensibility, that which cannot be comprehended and that which can be comprehended, that which is entirely independent and that which is totally dependent, the Creator forming all things and the creature made met together to a personal union, the Word made flesh, John i. 14, the eternal Son the seed of Abraham, Heb. ii. 16. What more miraculous than for God to become man, and man to become God! That a person possessed of all the perfections of the Godhead should inherit all the imperfections of the manhood in one person, sin only excepted; a holiness incapable of sinning to be made sin; God blessed for ever taking the properties of human nature, and human nature admitted to a union with the properties of the Creator; the fulness of the Deity and the emptiness of man united together, Col. ii. 9, not by a shining of the Deity upon the humanity, as the light of the sun upon the earth, but by an inhabitation or indwelling of the Deity in the humanity: was there not need of an infinite power to bring together terms so far asunder, to elevate the humanity to be capable

* Amyraut, sur Timole, p. 292.

of, and disposed for, a conjunction with the Deity? If a clod of earth should be advanced to, and united with, the body of the sun, such an advance would evidence itself to be a work of almighty power; the clod hath nothing in its own nature to render it so glorious, no power to climb up to so high a dignity. How little would such a union be to that we are speaking of! Nothing less than an incomprehensible power could effect what an incomprehensible wisdom did project in this affair.

Thirdly, Especially since the union is so strait. It is not such a union as is between a man and his house he dwells in, whence he goes out and to which he returns, without any alteration of himself or his house; nor such a union as is between a man and his garment, which both communicate and receive warmth from one another; nor such as is between an artificer and his instrument wherewith he works; nor such a union as one friend hath with another. All these are distant things, not one in nature, but have distinct substances. Two friends, though united by love, are distinct persons; a man and his clothes, an artificer and his instruments, have distinct substances; but the humanity of Christ hath no substance but in the person of Christ.

The straitness of this union is expressed, and may be somewhat conceived by the union of fire with iron.* Fire pierceth through all the parts of iron, it unites itself with every particle, bestows a light, heat, purity upon all of it; you cannot distinguish the iron from the fire, or the fire from the iron; yet they are distinct natures. So the Deity is united to the whole humanity, seasons it, and bestows an excellency upon it, yet the natures still remain distinct. And as, during that union of fire with iron, the iron is incapable of rust or blackness, so is the humanity incapable of sin. And as the operation of fire is attributed to the red hot iron (as the iron may be said to heat, burn, and the fire may be said to cut and pierce), yet the imperfections of the iron do not affect the fire; so in this mystery, those things which belong to the divinity are ascribed to the humanity, and those things which belong to the humanity are ascribed to the divinity, in regard of the person in whom those natures are united; yet the imperfections of the humanity do not hurt the divinity. The divinity of Christ is as really united with the humanity as the soul with the body. The person was one, though the natures were two; so united, that the sufferings of the human nature were the sufferings of that person, and the dignity of the divine was imputed to the human by reason of that unity of both in one person. Hence the blood of the human nature is said to be the blood of God, Acts xx. 28. All things ascribed to the Son of God may be ascribed to this man, and the things ascribed to this man may be ascribed to the Son of God, as this man is the Son of God eternal, almighty.† And it may be said God suffered, was crucified, &c.; for the person of Christ is but one, most simple; the person suffered, that was God and man united, making one person.

Fourthly, And though the union be so strait, yet without confusion of the natures, or change of them into one another. The two natures of Christ are not mixed,‡ as liquors that incorporate with one another when they are poured into a vessel; the divine nature is not turned into the human, nor the human into the divine; one nature doth not swallow up another and make a third nature distinct from each of them. The Deity is not turned into the humanity, as air (which is next to a spirit) may be thickened and turned into water, and water may be rarefied into air by the power of heat boiling it. The Deity cannot be changed, because the nature of it is to be

* Lessius de Perf. Divin., lib. xii. cap. iv. p. 104.

† Ibid., p. 103, 104.

‡ Ibid., p. 103, 104; Amyrald, Irenic., p. 234.

unchangeable. It would not be deity if it were mortal and capable of suffering. The humanity is not changed into the deity, for then Christ could not have been a sufferer. If the humanity had been swallowed up into the deity, it had lost its own distinct nature, and put on the nature of the Deity, and consequently been incapable of suffering. Finite can never by any mixture be changed into infinite, nor infinite into finite.

This union in this regard may be resembled to the union of light and air, which are strictly joined; for the light passes through all parts of the air, but they are not confounded, but remain in their distinct essences as before the union, without the least confusion with one another. The divine nature remains as it was before the union, entire in itself, only the divine person assumes another nature to himself.* The human nature remains as it would have done had it existed separately from the *Λόγος*, except that then it would have had a proper subsistence by itself, which now it borrows from its union with the *Λόγος*, or Word, but that doth not belong to the constitution of its nature.

Now let us consider what a wonder of power is all this. The knitting a noble soul to a body of clay was not so great an exploit of almightiness as the espousing infinite and finite together. Man is further distant from God than man from nothing. What a wonder is it that two natures infinitely distant should be more intimately united than anything in the world, and yet without any confusion! That the same person should have both a glory and a grief; an infinite joy in the Deity, and an unexpressible sorrow in the humanity; that a God upon a throne should be an infant in a cradle; the thundering Creator be a weeping babe and a suffering man, are such expressions of mighty power, as well as condescending love, that they astonish men upon earth, and angels in heaven.

[3.] Power was evident in the progress of his life. In the miracles he wrought, how often did he expel malicious and powerful devils from their habitations, hurl them from their thrones, and make them fall from heaven like lightning. How many wonders were wrought by his bare word or a single touch: sight restored to the blind, and hearing to the deaf, palsied members restored to the exercise of their functions, a dismiss given to many deplorable maladies, impure leprosy chased from the persons they had infected, and bodies beginning to putrefy raised from the grave. But the mightiest argument of power was his patience: that he who was in his divine nature elevated above the world should so long continue upon a dunghill, 'endure the contradiction of sinners against himself,' be patiently subject to the reproaches and indignities of men, without displaying that justice which was essential to the Deity, and in especial manner daily merited by their provoking crimes. The patience of man under great affronts is a greater argument of power than the brawniness of his arm. A strength employed in the revenge of every injury signifies a greater infirmity in the soul than there can be ability in the body.

[4.] Divine power was apparent in his resurrection. The unlocking the belly of the whale for the deliverance of Jonas, the rescue of Daniel from the den of lions, and the restraining the fire from burning the three children, were signal declarations of his power, and types of the resurrection of our Saviour. But what are those to that which was represented by them? That was a power over natural causes, a curbing of beasts and restraining of elements; but in the resurrection of Christ, God exercised a power over himself, and quenched the flames of his own wrath, hotter than millions of Nebuchadnezzar's furnaces; unlocked the prison doors, wherein the curses of the law had lodged our Saviour stronger than the belly and ribs of a

* Amyrald, *Irenic*, p. 282.

leviathan. In the rescue of Daniel and Jonas, God overpowered beasts, and in this tore up the strength of the old serpent, and plucked the sceptre from the hand of the enemy of mankind. The work of resurrection, indeed, considered in itself, requires the efficacy of an almighty power. Neither man nor angel can create new dispositions in a dead body, to render it capable of lodging a spiritual soul, nor can they restore a dislodged soul by their own power to such a body. The restoring a dead body to life requires an infinite power, as well as the creation of the world. But there was in the resurrection of Christ something more difficult than this. While he lay in the grave he was under the curse of the law, under the execution of that dreadful sentence, 'Thou shalt die the death.' His resurrection was not only the re-tying the marriage knot between his soul and body, or the rolling the stone from the grave, but a taking off an infinite weight, the sin of mankind, which lay upon him. So vast a weight could not be removed without the strength of an almighty arm. It is therefore ascribed not to an ordinary operation, but an operation with power, Rom. i. 4, and such a power wherein the glory of the Father did appear: Rom. vi. 4, 'Raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father;' that is, the glorious power of God. As the eternal generation is stupendous, so is his resurrection, which is called a new begetting of him, Acts xiii. 33. It is a wonder of power that the divine and human nature should be joined, and no less wonder that his person should surmount and rise up from the curse of God under which he lay. The apostle therefore adds one expression to another, and heaps up a variety, signifying thereby that one was not enough to represent it: Eph. i. 19, 'Exceeding greatness of power,' and 'working of mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead.' It was an *hyperbole* of power, the excellency of the mightiness of his strength; the loftiness of the expressions seems to come short of the apprehension he had of it in his soul.

(2.) Secondly, This power appears in the publication and propagation of the doctrine of redemption.

The divine power will appear, if you consider,

- [1.] The nature of the doctrine.
- [2.] The instruments employed in it.
- [3.] The means they used to propagate it.
- [4.] The success they had.

[1.] The nature of the doctrine.

First, It was contrary to the common received reason of the world. The philosophers, the masters of knowledge among the Gentiles, had maxims of a different stamp from it. Though they agreed in the being of a God, yet their notions of his nature were confused and embroiled with many errors; the unity of God was not commonly assented unto; they had multiplied deities according to the fancies they had received from some of a more elevated wit and refined brain than others. Though they had some notion of mediators, yet they placed in those seats their public benefactors; men that had been useful to the world, or their particular countries, in imparting to them some profitable invention. To discard those was to charge themselves with ingratitude to them, from whom they had received signal benefits, and to whose mediation, conduct, or protection they ascribed all the success they had been blessed with in their several provinces, and to charge themselves with folly, for rendering an honour and worship to them so long. Could the doctrine of a crucified Mediator, whom they had never seen, that had conquered no country for them, never enlarged their territories, brought

to light no new profitable invention for the increase of their earthly welfare, as the rest had done, be thought sufficient to balance so many of their reputed heroes? How ignorant were they in the foundations of the true religion! The belief of a providence was staggering; nor had they a true prospect of the nature of virtue and vice; yet they had a fond opinion of the strength of their own reason, and the maxims that had been handed down to them by their predecessors, which Paul entitles, a 'science falsely so called,' 1 Tim. vi. 20, either meant of the philosophers or the Gnostics. They presumed that they were able to measure all things by their own reason; whence, when the apostle came to preach the doctrine of the gospel at Athens, the great school of reason in that age, they gave him no better a title than that of a 'babbler,' Acts xvii. 18, and openly mocked him, ver. 32, *Σπρηματολόγος*, a seed-gatherer, one that hath no more brain or sense than a fellow that gathers up seeds that are spilt in a market, or one that hath a vain and empty sound without sense or reason, like a foolish mountebank; so slightly did those rationalists of the world think of the wisdom of heaven. That the Son of God should veil himself in a mortal body, and suffer a disgraceful death in it, were things above the ken of reason.

Besides, the world had a general disesteem of the religion of the Jews, and were prejudiced against anything that came from them. Whence the Romans, that used to incorporate the gods of other conquered nations in their capitol, never moved to have the God of Israel worshipped among them. Again, they might argue against it with much fleshly reason. Here is a crucified God preached by a company of mean and ignorant persons; what reason can we have to entertain this doctrine, since the Jews, who (as they tell us) had the prophecies of him, did not acknowledge him? Surely, had there been such predictions, they would not have crucified, but crowned their king, and expected from him the conquest of the earth under their power! What reason have we to entertain him, whom his own nation (among whom he lived, with whom he conversed) so unanimously, by the vote of the rulers as well as the rout, rejected? It was impossible to conquer minds possessed with so many errors, and applauding themselves in their own reason, and to render them capable of receiving revealed truths without the influence of a divine power.

Secondly, It was contrary to the customs of the world. The strength of custom in most men surmounts the strength of reason, and men commonly are so wedded to it, that they will be sooner divorced from anything than the modes and patterns received from their ancestors. The endeavouring to change customs of an ancient standing hath begotten tumults and furious mutinies among nations, though the change would have been much for their advantage.

This doctrine struck at the root of the religion of the world, and the ceremonies wherein they had been educated from their infancy, delivered to them from their ancestors, confirmed by the customary observance of many ages, rooted in their minds, and established by their laws. Acts xviii. 13, 'This fellow persuadeth us to worship God contrary to the law,' against customs, to which they ascribed the happiness of their states, and the prosperity of their people; and would put in the place of this religion they would abolish, a new one instituted by a man whom the Jews had condemned, and put to death upon a cross as an impostor, blasphemer, and seditious person.

It was a doctrine that would change the customs of the Jews, who were entrusted with the oracles of God. It would bury for ever their ceremonial rites, delivered to them by Moses from that God who had with a mighty hand brought them out of Egypt, consecrated their law with thunders and

lightnings from mount Sinai at the time of its publication, backed it with severe sanctions, confirmed it by many miracles, both in the wilderness and their Canaan, and had continued it for so many hundred years. They could not but remember how they had been ravaged by other nations, and judgments sent upon them when they neglected and slighted it, and with what great success they were followed when they valued and observed it, and how they had abhorred the author of this new religion, who had spoken slightly of their traditions, till they put him to death with infamy. Was it an easy matter to divorce them from that worship, upon which were entailed (as they imagined) their peace, plenty, and glory, things of the dearest regard with mankind? The Jews were no less devoted to their ceremonial traditions, than the heathen were to their vain superstitions.

This doctrine of the gospel was of that nature, that the state of religion all over the earth must be overturned by it; the wisdom of the Greeks must veil to it, the idolatry of the people must stoop to it, and the profane customs of men must moulder under the weight of it. Was it an easy matter for the pride of nature to deny a customary wisdom, to entertain a new doctrine against the authority of their ancestors, to inscribe folly upon that which hath made them admired by the rest of the world? Nothing can be of greater esteem with men than the credit of their lawgivers and founders, the religion of their fathers, and prosperity of themselves; hence the minds of men were sharpened against it. The Greeks, the wisest nation, slighted it as foolish; the Jews, the religious nation, stumbled at it, as contrary to the received interpretations of ancient prophecies, and carnal conceits of an earthly glory. The dimmest eye may behold the difficulty to change custom, a second nature; it is as hard as to change a wolf into a lamb, to level a mountain, stop the course of the sun, or change the inhabitants of Africa into the colour of Europe. Custom dips men in as durable a dye as nature. The difficulties of carrying it on against the divine religion of the Jew, and rooted customs of the Gentiles, were unconquerable by any but an almighty power. And in this the power of God hath appeared wonderfully.

Thirdly, It was contrary to the sensuality of the world, and the lust of the flesh. How much the Gentiles were overgrown with base and unworthy lusts at the time of the publication of the gospel, needs no other memento than the apostle's discourse, Rom. i. As there was no error but prevailed upon their minds, so there was no brutish affection but was wedded to their hearts. The doctrine proposed to them was not easy; it flattered not the sense, but checked the stream of nature. It thundered down those three great engines whereby the devil had subdued the world to himself, 'the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.' Not only the most sordid affections of the flesh, but the more refined gratifications of the mind; it stripped nature both of devil and man, of what was commonly esteemed great and virtuous. That which was the root of their fame, and satisfaction of their ambition, was struck at by this axe of the gospel. The first article of it ordered them to deny themselves, not to presume upon their own worth; to lay their understandings and wills at the foot of the cross, and resign them up to one newly crucified at Jerusalem. Honours and wealth were to be despised, flesh to be tamed, the cross to be borne, enemies to be loved, revenge not to be satisfied, blood to be spilled, and torments to be endured for the honour of one they never saw nor ever before heard of, who was preached with the circumstances of a shameful death, enough to affright them from the entertainment; and the report of a resurrection and glorious ascension were things never heard of by them before, and unknown in the world, that would not easily enter into the belief of

men. The cross, disgrace, self-denial, were only discoursed of in order to the attainment of an invisible world, and an unseen reward, which none of their predecessors ever returned to acquaint them with ; a patient death, contrary to the pride of nature, was published as the way to happiness and a blessed immortality. The dearest lusts were to be pierced to death for the honour of this new lord. Other religions brought wealth and honour ; this struck them off from such expectations, and presented them with no promise of anything in this life but a prospect of misery, except those inward consolations to which before they had been utter strangers, and had never experimented. It made them to depend not upon themselves, but upon the sole grace of God. It decried all natural, all moral idolatry, things as dear to men as the apple of their eyes. It despoiled them of whatsoever the mind, will, and affections of men naturally lay claim to and glory in. It pulled self up by the roots, unmanned carnal man, and debased the principle of honour and self-satisfaction, which the world counted at that time noble and brave. In a word, it took them off from themselves, to act like creatures of God's framing, to know no more than he would admit them, and do no more than he did command them. How difficult must it needs be to reduce men, that placed all their happiness in the pleasures of this life, from their pompous idolatry and brutish affections, to this mortifying religion. What might the world say ? Here is a doctrine will render us a company of puling animals. Farewell generosity, bravery, sense of honour, courage, in enlarging the bounds of our country, for an ardent charity to the bitterest of our enemies. Here is a religion will rust our swords, canker our arms, dis-spirit what we have hitherto called virtue, and annihilate what hath been esteemed worthy and comely among mankind. Must we change conquest for suffering, the increase of our reputation for self-denial, the natural sentiment of self-preservation for affecting a dreadful death ? How impossible was it that a crucified Lord and a crucifying doctrine should be received in the world, without the mighty operation of a divine power upon the hearts of men ! And in this also the almighty power of God did notably shine forth.

[2.] Divine power appeared in the instruments employed for the publishing and propagating the gospel ; who were,

First, Mean and worthless in themselves ; not noble and dignified with an earthly grandeur, but of a low condition, meanly bred ; so far from any splendid estates, that they possessed nothing but their nets, without any credit and reputation in the world, without comeliness and strength, as unfit to subdue the world by preaching, as an army of hares were to conquer it by war. Not learned doctors, bred up at the feet of the famous rabbins at Jerusalem, whom Paul calls ' the princes of the world,' 1 Cor. ii. 8, nor nursed up in the school of Athens, under the philosophers and orators of the time ; not the wise men of Greece, but the fishermen of Galilee, naturally skilled in no language but their own, and no more exact in that than those of the same condition in any other nation ; ignorant of everything but the language of their lakes and their fishing trade, except Paul, called some time after the rest to that employment ; and after the descent of the Spirit, they were ignorant and unlearned in everything but the doctrine they were commanded to publish, for the council before whom they were summoned proved them to be so, which increased their wonder at them, Acts iv. 13. Had it been published by a voice from heaven that twelve poor men, taken out of boats and creeks, without any help of learning, should conquer the world to the cross, it might have been thought an illusion against all the reason of men ; yet we know it was undertaken and accomplished by them.

They published this doctrine in Jerusalem, and quickly spread it over the greatest part of the world. Folly outwitted wisdom, and weakness overpowered strength. The conquest of the east by Alexander was not so admirable as the enterprise of these poor men. He attempted his conquest with the hands of a warlike nation, though indeed but a small number of thirty thousand against multitudes, many hundred thousands of the enemies, yet an effeminate enemy; a people inured to slaughter and victory attacked great numbers, but enfeebled by luxury and voluptuousness. Besides, he was bred up to such enterprises, had a learned education under the best philosopher, and a military education under the best commander, and a natural courage to animate him. These instruments had no such advantage from nature; the heavenly 'treasure was placed in those earthen vessels,' as Gideon's lamps in empty pitchers, Judges vii. 16; 'that the excellency' or *hyperbole*, 'of the power might be of God,' 2 Cor. iv. 7, and the strength of his arm be displayed in the infirmity of the instruments. They were destitute of earthly wisdom, and therefore despised by the Jews and derided by the Gentiles; the publishers were accounted madmen, and the embracers fools. Had they been men of known natural endowments, the power of God had been veiled under the gifts of the creature.

Secondly, Therefore a divine power suddenly spirited them, and fitted them for so great a work. Instead of ignorance they had the knowledge of the tongues, and they that were scarce well skilled in their own dialect, were instructed on the sudden to speak the most flourishing languages of the world, and discourse to the people of several nations the 'great things of God,' Acts ii. 11. Though they were not enriched with any worldly wealth, and possessed nothing, yet they were so sustained that they wanted nothing in any place where they came; a table was spread for them in the midst of their bitterest enemies. Their fearfulness was turned into courage, and they that a few days before skulked in corners for fear of the Jews, John xx. 19, speak boldly in the name of that Jesus, whom they had seen put to death by the power of the rulers and the fury of the people; they reproach them with the murder of their master, and outbrave that great people in the midst of their temple, with the glory of that person they had so lately crucified, Acts ii. 23, iii. 13. Peter, that was not long before qualmed at the presence of a maid, was not daunted at the presence of the council, that had their hands yet reeking with the blood of his master, but being filled with the Holy Ghost, seems to dare the power of the priests and Jewish governors, and is as confident in the council chamber as he had been cowardly in the high priest's hall, Acts iv. 9, &c., the efficacy of grace triumphing over the fearfulness of nature. Whence should this ardour and zeal to propagate a doctrine that had already borne the scars of the people's fury be, but from a mighty power which changed those hares into lions, and stripped them of their natural cowardice to clothe them with a divine courage, making them in a moment both wise and magnanimous, alienating them from any consultations with flesh and blood? As soon as ever the Holy Ghost came upon them 'as a mighty rushing wind,' they move up and down for the interest of God, as fish after a great clap of thunder are roused, and move more nimbly on the top of the water; therefore, that which did so fit them for this undertaking is called by the title of 'power from on high,' Luke xxiv. 49.

[3.] The divine power appears in the means whereby it was propagated.

First, By means different from the methods of the world. Not by force of arms, as some religions have taken root in the world. Mahomet's horse bath trampled upon the heads of men, to imprint an *Alcoran* in their brains, and robbed men of their goods to plant their religion. But the apostles

bore not this doctrine through the world upon the points of their swords ; they presented a bodily death where they would bestow an immortal life ; they employed not troops of men in a warlike posture, which had been possible for them after the gospel was once spread ; they had no ambition to subdue men unto themselves, but to God ; they coveted not the possessions of others ; designed not to enrich themselves ; invaded not the rights of princes, nor the liberties and properties of the people ; they rifled them not of their estates, nor scared them into this religion by a fear of losing their worldly happiness. The arguments they used would naturally drive them from an entertainment of this doctrine, rather than allure them to be proselytes to it. Their design was to change their hearts, not their government ; to wean them from the love of the world to a love of a Redeemer ; to remove that which would ruin their souls. It was not to enslave them, but ransom them ; they had a ' warfare,' but not with ' carnal weapons,' but such as were ' mighty through God for the pulling down of strongholds,' 2 Cor. x. 4 ; they used no weapons but the doctrine they preached. Others that have not gained conquests by the edge of the sword and the stratagems of war, have extended their opinions to others by the strength of human reason and the insinuations of eloquence. But the apostles had as little flourish in their tongues as edge upon their swords ; their preaching was ' not with the enticing words of man's wisdom,' 1 Cor. ii. 4 ; their presence was mean, and their discourses without varnish ; their doctrine was plain, a crucified Christ, a doctrine unlaced, ungarnished, untoothsome to the world ; but they had the demonstration of the Spirit, and a mighty power for their companion in the work. The doctrine they preached, viz., the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, are called the ' powers,' not of this world, but ' of the world to come,' Heb. vi. 5. No less than a supernatural power could conduct them in this attempt, with such weak methods in human appearance.

Secondly, Against all the force, power, and wit of the world. The divisions in the eastern empire, and the feeble and consuming state of the western, contributed to Mahomet's success.* But never was Rome in a more flourishing condition ; learning, eloquence, wisdom, strength, were at the highest pitch. Never was there a more diligent watch against any innovations ; never was that state governed by more severe and suspicious princes than at the time when Tiberius and Nero held the reins. No time seemed to be more unfit for the entrance of a new doctrine, than that age wherein it begun to be first published ; never did any religion meet with that opposition from men. Idolatry hath been often settled without any contest : but this hath suffered the same fate with the institutor of it, and endured the contradictions of sinners against itself. And those that published it were not only without any worldly prop, but exposed themselves to the hatred and fury, to the racks and tortures, of the strongest powers on earth. It never set foot in any place, but the country was in an uproar, Acts xix. 28 ; swords were drawn to destroy it ; laws made to suppress it ; prisons provided for the professors of it ; fires kindled to consume them, and executioners had a perpetual employment to stifle the progress of it.

Rome in the conquest of countries changed not the religion, rites, and modes of their worship. They altered their civil government, but left them to the liberty of their religion, and many times joined with them in the worship of their peculiar gods ; and sometimes imitated them at Rome, instead of abolishing them in the cities they had subdued. But all their councils were assembled, and their force was banded ' against the Lord and

* Daille, Serm. xv. p. 57.

against his Christ,' and that city that kindly received all manner of superstitions, hated this doctrine with an irreconcilable hatred. It met with reproaches from the wise, and fury from the potentates; it was derided by the one as the greatest folly, and persecuted by the other as contrary to God and mankind; the one were afraid to lose their esteems by the doctrine, and the other to lose their authority by a sedition they thought a change of religion would introduce. The Romans, that had been conquerors of the earth, feared intestine commotions, and the falling asunder the links of their empire. Scarce any of their first emperors but had their swords dyed red in the blood of the Christians. The flesh with all its lusts, the world with all its flatteries, the statesmen with all their craft, and the mighty with all their strength, joined together to extirpate it. Though many members were taken off by the fires, yet the church not only lived, but flourished in the furnace. Converts were made by the death of martyrs, and the flames which consumed their bodies, were the occasion of firing men's hearts with a zeal for the profession of it. Instead of being extinguished, the doctrine shone more bright, and multiplied under the sickles that were employed to cut it down. God ordered every circumstance so, both in the persons that published it, the means whereby, and the time when, that nothing but his power might appear in it, without anything to dim and darken it.

[4.] The divine power was conspicuous in the great success it had under all these difficulties. Multitudes were prophesied of to embrace it; whence the prophet Isaiah, after the prophecy of the death of Christ, Isa. liii., calls upon the church to 'enlarge her tents, and lengthen out her cords' to receive those multitudes of children that should call her mother, Isa. liv. 2, 3, for she should 'break forth on the right hand and on the left, and her seed should inherit the Gentiles.' The idolaters and persecutors should lift their names in the muster-roll of the church.

Presently after the descent of the Holy Ghost from heaven upon the apostles, you find the hearts of three thousand melted by a plain declaration of this doctrine, who were a little before so far from having a favourable thought of it, that some of them at least, if not all, had expressed their rage against it, in voting for the condemning and crucifying the author of it, Acts ii. 41, 42. But in a moment they were so altered, that they breathe out affections instead of fury; neither the respect they had to their rulers, nor the honour they bore to their priests, nor the derisions of the people, nor the threatening of punishment, could stop them from owning it in the face of multitudes of discouragements. How wonderful is it that they should so soon, and by such small means, pay a reverence to the servants, who had none for the master! that they should hear them with patience, without the same clamour against them as against Christ, Crucify them, crucify them! but that their hearts should so suddenly be inflamed with devotion to him dead, whom they so much abhorred when living. It had gained footing not in a corner of the world, but in the most famous cities; in Jerusalem, where Christ had been crucified; in Antioch, where the name of Christians first began; in Corinth, a place of ingenious arts; and Ephesus, the seat of a noted idol. In less than twenty years there was never a province of the Roman empire, and scarce any part of the known world, but was stored with the professors of it. Rome, that was the metropolis of the idolatrous world, had multitudes of them sprinkled in every corner, whose 'faith was spoken of throughout the world,' Rom. i. 8. The court of Nero, that monster of mankind, and the cruellest and sordidest tyrant that ever breathed, was not empty of sincere votaries to it; there were 'saints in Cæsar's house,' while Paul was under Nero's chain, Philip. iv. And it maintained its standing,

and flourished in spite of all the force of hell 250 years before any sovereign prince espoused it.

The potentates of the earth had conquered the lands of men, and subdued their bodies ; these vanquished hearts and wills, and brought the most beloved thoughts under the yoke of Christ. So much did this doctrine overmaster the consciences of its followers, that they rejoiced more at their yoke than others at their liberty, and counted it more a glory to die for the honour of it, than to live in the profession of it. Thus did our Saviour reign and gather subjects in the midst of his enemies ; in which respect, in the first discovery of the gospel, he is described as a mighty conqueror, Rev. vi. 2, and still conquering in the greatness of his strength.

How great a testimony of his power is it, that from so small a cloud should rise so glorious a sun, that should chase before it the darkness and power of hell, triumph over the idolatry, superstition and profaneness of the world ! This plain doctrine vanquished the obstinacy of the Jews, baffled the understanding of the Greeks, humbled the pride of the grandees, threw the devil not only out of bodies but hearts, tore up the foundation of his empire, and planted the cross where the devil had for many ages before established his standard. How much more than a human force is illustrious in this whole conduct ! Nothing in any age of the world can parallel it, it being so much against the methods of nature, the disposition of the world, and (considering the resistance against it) seems to surmount even the work of creation. Never were there in any profession such multitudes, not of bedlams, but men of sobriety, acuteness, and wisdom, that exposed themselves to the fury of the flames, and challenged death in the most terrifying shapes for the honour of this doctrine.

To conclude ; this should be often meditated upon to form our understandings to a full assent to the gospel, and the truth of it ; the want of which consideration of power, and the customariness of an education in the outward profession of it, is the ground of all the profaneness under it, and apostasy from it, the disesteem of the truth it declares, and the neglect of the duties it enjoins. The more we have a prospect and sense of the impressions of divine power in it, the more we shall have a reverence of the divine precepts.

(3.) The third thing is, the power of God appears in the application of redemption, as well as in the person redeeming, and the publication and propagation of the doctrine of redemption.

- [1.] In the planting grace.
- [2.] In the pardon of sin.
- [3.] In the preserving grace.

[1.] In the planting grace. There is no expression which the Spirit of God hath thought fit in Scripture to resemble this work to, but argues the exerting of a divine power for the effecting of it. When it is expressed by light, it is as much as the power of God in creating the sun ; when by regeneration, it is as much as the power of God in forming an infant, and fashioning all the parts of a man ; when it is called resurrection, it is as much as the rearing of the body again out of putrefied matter ; when it is called creation, it is as much as erecting a comely world out of mere nothing, or an inform and uncomely mass. As we could not contrive the death of Christ for our redemption, so we cannot form our souls to the acceptation of it ; the infinite efficacy of grace is as necessary for the one, as the infinite wisdom of God was for laying the platform of the other.

It is by his power we have whatsoever pertains to godliness as well as

life, 2 Peter i. 3. He puts his fingers upon the handle of the lock, and turns the heart to what point he pleases; the action whereby he performs this is expressed by a word of force: Col. i. 13, ἐξῆλυσάτο, 'He hath snatched us from the power of darkness;' the action whereby it is performed manifests it. In reference to this power, it is called creation, which is a production from nothing; and conversion is a production from something more incapable of that state, than mere nothing is of being. There is a greater distance between the terms of sin and righteousness, corruption and grace, than between the terms of nothing and being; the greater the distance is, the more power is required to the producing anything. As in miracles, the miracle is the greater where the change is the greater; and the change is the greater where the distance is the greater. As it was a more signal mark of power to change a dead man to life, than to change a sick man to health, so that the change here being from a term of a greater distance, is more powerful than the creation of heaven and earth. Therefore, whereas creation is said to be wrought by his hands, and the heavens by his fingers, or his word, conversion is said to be wrought by his arm, Isa. liii. 1. In creation we had an earthly, by conversion a heavenly state; in creation, nothing is changed into something; in conversion, hell is transformed into heaven, which is more than the turning nothing into a glorious angel. In that thanksgiving of our Saviour for the revelation of the knowledge of himself to babes, the simple of the world, he gives the title to his Father, of 'Lord of heaven and earth,' Mat. xi. 25, intimating it to be an act of his creative and preserving power; that power whereby he formed heaven and earth, hath preserved the standing and governed the motions of all creatures from the beginning of the world.

It is resembled to the most magnificent act of divine power that God ever put forth, viz., that in the resurrection of our Saviour, Eph. i. 19, wherein there was more than an ordinary impression of might. It is not so small a power as that whereby we speak with tongues, or whereby Christ opened the mouths of the dumb and the ears of the deaf, or unloosed the cords of death from a person. It is not that power whereby our Saviour wrought those stupendous miracles when he was in the world; but that power which wrought a miracle that amazed the most knowing angels as well as ignorant man, the taking off the weight of the sin of the world from our Saviour, and advancing him in his human nature to rule over the angelical host, making him head of principalities and powers; as much as to say, as great as all that power which is displayed in our redemption, from the first foundation to the last line in the superstructure. It is therefore often set forth with an emphasis, as 'excellency of power,' 2 Cor. iv. 7, and glorious power, 2 Peter. i. 3. 'To glory and virtue,' we translate it; but it is *διὰ δόξης*, 'through glory and virtue,' that is, by a glorious virtue or strength.

The instrument whereby it is wrought is dignified with the title of power. The gospel, which God useth in this great affair, is called 'the power of God to salvation,' Rom. i. 16, and the 'rod of his strength,' Ps. cx. 2. And the day of the gospel's appearance in the heart is emphatically called, 'the day of power,' verse 3, wherein he brings down strongholds and towering imaginations. And therefore the angel Gabriel, which name signifies the power of God, was always sent upon those messages which concerned the gospel, as to Daniel, Zacharias, Mary.* The gospel is the power of God in a way of instrumentality, but the almightiness of God is the principle in a way of efficiency. The gospel is the sceptre of Christ, but the power of Christ is the mover of that sceptre. The gospel is not as a bare word

* Grotius in Luke i. 19.

spoken, and proposing the thing, but as backed with a higher efficacy of grace; as the sword doth instrumentally cut, but the arm that wields it gives the blow, and makes it successful in the stroke. But this gospel is the power of God, because he edgeth this by his own power, to surmount all resistance, and vanquish the greatest malice of that man he designs to work upon.

The power of God is conspicuous.

First, In turning the heart of man against the strength of the inclinations of nature. In the forming of man of the dust of the ground, as the matter contributed nothing to the action whereby God formed it, so it had no principle of resistance contrary to the design of God. But in converting the heart, there is not only wanting a principle of assistance from him in this work, but the whole strength of corrupt nature is alarmed to combat against the power of his grace. When the gospel is presented, the understanding is not only ignorant of it, but the will perverse against it; the one doth not relish, and the other not esteem the excellency of the object. The carnal wisdom in the mind contrives against it, and the rebellious will puts the orders in execution against the counsel of God, which requires the invincible power of God to enlighten the dark mind, to know what it slights; and the fierce will, to embrace what it loathes. The stream of nature cannot be turned, but by a power above nature. It is not all the created power in heaven and earth can change a swine into a man, or a venomous toad into a holy and illustrious angel. Yet this work is not so great in some respect, as the stilling the fierceness of nature, the silencing the swelling waves in the heart, and the casting out those brutish affections which are born and grow up with us. There would be no, or far less, resistance in a mere animal to be changed into a creature of a higher rank, than there is in a natural man to be turned into a serious Christian.

There is in every natural man a stoutness of heart, a stiff-neck unwillingness to good, forwardness to evil. Infinite power quells this stoutness, demolisheth these strongholds, turns this wild ass in her course, and routs those armies of turbulent nature against the grace of God. To stop the floods of the sea is not such an act of power as to turn the tide of the heart. This power hath been employed upon every convert in the world. What would you say, then, if you knew all the channels in which it hath run since the days of Adam? If the alteration of one rocky heart into a pool of water be a wonder of power, what then is the calming and sweetening by his word those 'one hundred forty-four thousand of the tribes of Israel,' and that numberless multitude of all nations and people that shall stand before the throne, Rev. vii. 9, which were all naturally so many raging seas? Not one converted soul, from Adam to the last that shall be in the end of the world, but is a trophy of the divine conquest. None were pure volunteers, nor listed themselves in his service till he put forth his strong arm to draw them to him. No man's understanding but was chained with darkness, and fond of it; no man but had corruption in his will, which was dearer to him than anything else which could be proposed for his true happiness. These things are most evident in Scripture and experience.

Secondly, As it is wrought against the inclinations of nature, so against a multitude of corrupt habits rooted in the souls of men. A distemper in its first invasion may more easily be cured than when it becomes chronic and inveterate. The strength of a disease, or the complication of many, magnifies the power of the physician and efficacy of the medicine that tames and expels it. What power is that which hath made men stoop, when natural habits have been grown giants by custom, when the putrefaction of nature hath engendered a multitude of worms, when the ulcers are many and de-

plorable, when many cords, wherewith God would have bound the sinner, have been broken, and (like Samson) the wicked heart hath gloried in its strength, and grown more proud that it hath stood like a strong fort against those batteries under which others have fallen flat.

Every proud thought, every evil habit captivated, serves for matter of triumph to the power of God, 2 Cor. x. 5. What resistance will a multitude of them make, when one of them is enough to hold the faculty under its dominion, and intercept its operations! So many customary habits, so many old natures, so many different strengths added to nature, every one of them standing as a barricado against the way of grace; all the errors the understanding is possessed with think the gospel folly, all the vices the will is filled with count it the fetter and band. Nothing so contrary to man as to be thought a fool; nothing so contrary to man as to enter into slavery. It is no easy matter to plant the cross of Christ upon a heart guided by many principles against the truth of it, and biassed by a world of wickedness against the holiness of it. Nature renders a man too feeble and indisposed, and custom renders a man more weak and unwilling to change his hue, Jer. xiii. 23. To dispossess man, then, of his self-esteem and self-excellency, to make room for God in the heart where there was none but for sin, as dear to him as himself, to hurl down the pride of nature, to make stout imaginations stoop to the cross, to make desires of self-advancement sink under a zeal for the glorifying of God and an over-ruling design for his honour, is not to be ascribed to any but an outstretched arm wielding the sword of the Spirit. To have a heart full of the fear of God, that was just before filled with a contempt of him; to have a sense of his power, an eye to his glory, admiring thoughts of his wisdom, a faith in his truth, that had lower thoughts of him and all his perfections than he had of a creature; to have a hatred of his habitual lusts, that had brought him in much sensitive pleasure; to loathe them as much as he loved them, to cherish the duties he hated; to live by faith in, and obedience to, the Redeemer, who was before so heartily under the conduct of Satan and self; to chase the acts of sin from his members, and the pleasing thoughts of sin from his mind; to make a stout wretch willingly fall down, crawl upon the ground, and adore that Saviour whom before he out-dared, is a triumphant act of infinite power that can 'subdue all things to itself,' and break those multitude of locks and bolts that were upon us.

Thirdly, Against a multitude of temptations and interests. The temptations rich men have in this world are so numerous and strong that the entrance of one of them into the kingdom of heaven, that is, the entertainment of the gospel, is made by our Saviour an impossible thing with men, and procurable only by the power of God, Luke xviii. 24-26. The divine strength only can separate the world from the heart, and the heart from the world. There must be an incomprehensible power to chase away the devil, that had so long so strong a footing in the affections, to render the soil he had sown with so many tares and weeds capable of good grain; to make spirits that had found the sweetness of worldly prosperity, wrapped up all their happiness in it, and not only bent down, but (as it were) buried in earth and mud, to be loosened from those beloved cords, to disrelish the earth for a crucified Christ, I say this must be the effect of an almighty power.

Fourthly, The manner of conversion shews no less the power of God. There is not only a resistible force used in it, but an agreeable sweetness. The power is so efficacious, that nothing can vanquish it, and so sweet, that none did ever complain of it. The almighty virtue displays itself invincibly,

yet without constraint, compelling the will without offering violence to it, and making it cease to be will: not forcing it, but changing it; not dragging it, but drawing it; making it will where before it nilled; removing the corrupt nature of the will without invading the created nature and rights of the faculty; not working in us against the physical nature of the will, but 'working to will,' Phil. ii. 18. This work is therefore called creation, resurrection, to shew its irresistible power; it is called illumination, persuasion, drawing, to shew the suitableness of its efficacy to the nature of the human faculties. It is a drawing with cords, which testifies an invincible strength; but with 'cords of love,' which testifies a delightful conquest. It is hard to determine whether it be more powerful than sweet, or more sweet than powerful. It is no mean part of the power of God to twist together victory and pleasure; to give a blow as delightful as strong, as pleasing to the sufferer as it is sharp to the sinner.

[2.] The power of God in the application of redemption is evident in the pardoning a sinner.

First, In the pardon itself, The power of God is made the ground of his patience; or the reason why he is patient is because he would shew his power, Rom. ix. 22. It is a part of magnanimity to pass by injuries. As weaker stomachs cannot concoct the tougher food, so weak minds cannot digest the harder injuries. He that passes over a wrong is superior to his adversary that does it. When God speaks of his own name as merciful, he speaks first of himself as powerful: Exod. xxxiv. 6, The Lord, the Lord God, that is, the Lord, the strong Lord, Jehovah, the strong Jehovah. 'Let the power of my Lord be great,' saith Moses, when he prays for the forgiveness of the people (Numb. xiv. 17, *יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ*, be exalted; Sept., כח, strength, &c.). The word *Jigdal* is written with a great *jod*, or a *jod* above the other letters. The power of God in pardoning is advanced beyond an ordinary strain, beyond the creative strength. In the creation, he had power over the creatures; in this, power over himself. In creation, not himself, but the creatures, were the object of his power; in that, no attribute of his nature could article against his design. In the pardon of a sinner, after many overtures made to him and refused by him, God exerciseth a power over himself; for the sinner hath dishonoured God, provoked his justice, abused his goodness, done injury to all those attributes which are necessary to his relief. It was not so in creation; nothing was incapable of disobliging God from bringing it into being. The dust, which was the matter of Adam's body, needed only the extrinsic power of God to form it into a man, and inspire it with a living soul. It had not rendered itself obnoxious to divine justice, nor was capable to excite any disputes between his perfections; but after the entrance of sin, and the merit of death thereby, there was a resistance in justice to the free remission of man. God was to exercise a power over himself, to answer his justice and pardon the sinner, as well as a power over the creature to reduce the runaway rebel. Unless we have recourse to the infiniteness of God's power, the infiniteness of our guilt will weigh us down. We must consider not only that we have a mighty guilt to press us, but a mighty God to relieve us. In the same act of his being our righteousness, he is our strength: 'In the Lord have I righteousness and strength,' Isa. xlv. 24.

Secondly, In the sense of pardon. When the soul hath been wounded with the sense of sin, and its iniquities have stared it in the face, the raising the soul from a despairing condition, and lifting it above those waters which terrified it, to cast the light of comfort as well as the light of grace into a heart covered with more than an Egyptian darkness, is an act of his infinite

and creating power: Isa. lvii. 19, 'I create the fruit of the lips, peace.' Men may wear out their lips with numbering up the promises of grace and arguments of peace, but all will signify no more without a creative power than if all men and angels should call to that white upon the wall to shine as splendidly as the sun. God only can 'create Jerusalem,' and every child of Jerusalem 'a rejoicing,' Isa. lxi. 18. A man is no more able to apply to himself any word of comfort under the sense of sin, than he is able to convert himself, and turn the proposals of the word into gracious affections in his heart. To 'restore the joy of salvation' is in David's judgment an act of sovereign power, equal to that of 'creating a clean heart,' Ps. li. 10, 12. Alas! it is a state like to that of death; as infinite power can only raise from natural death, so from a spiritual death, also from a comfortless death: 'In his favour there is life,' in the want of his favour there is death. The power of God hath so placed light in the sun, that all creatures in the world, all the torches upon earth kindled together, cannot make it day if that doth not rise; so all the angels in heaven and men upon earth are not competent chirurgeons for a wounded spirit. The cure of our spiritual ulcers, and the pouring in balm, is an act of sovereign creative power. It is more visible in silencing a tempestuous conscience, than the power of our Saviour was in the stilling the stormy winds and the roaring waves. As none but infinite power can remove the guilt of sin, so none but infinite power can remove the despairing sense of it.

[3.] This power is evident in the preserving grace. As the providence of God is a manifestation of his power in a continued creation, so the preservation of grace is a manifestation of his power in a continued regeneration; to keep a nation under the yoke is an act of the same power that subdued it. It is this that strengthens men in suffering against the fury of hell, Col. i. 13; it is this that keeps them from falling against the force of hell, the Father's hand, John x. 29. His strength abates and moderates the violence of temptations; his staff sustains his people under them; his might defeats the power of Satan, and bruises him under a believer's feet. The counter-workings of indwelling corruption, the reluctances of the flesh against the breathings of the Spirit, the fallacy of the senses and the roving of the mind, have ability quickly to stifle and extinguish grace, if it were not maintained by that powerful blast that first inbreathed it. No less power is seen in perfecting it, than was in planting it, 2 Peter i. 3; no less in fulfilling the work of faith, than in ingrafting the word of faith, 2 Thess. i. 11.

The apostle well understood the necessity and efficacy of it in the preservation of faith, as well as in the first infusion, when he expresses himself in those terms of a greatness or *hyperbole* of power, his 'mighty power,' or the 'power of his might,' Eph. i. 19. The salvation he bestows, and the strength whereby he effects it, are joined together in the prophet's song: Isa. xii. 2, 'The Lord is my strength and my salvation;' and, indeed, God doth more magnify his power in continuing a believer in the world, a weak and half-rigged vessel in the midst of so many sands whereon it might split, so many rocks whereon it might dash, so many corruptions within, and so many temptations without, than if he did immediately transport him into heaven, and clothe him with a perfectly sanctified nature.

To conclude; what is there, then, in the world, which is destitute of notices of divine power? Every creature affords us the lesson, all acts of divine government are the marks of it. Look into the word, and the manner of its propagation instructs us in it; your changed natures, your pardoned guilt, your shining comfort, your quelled corruptions, the standing of your staggering graces, are sufficient to preserve a sense, and prevent a forgetful-

ness of this great attribute, so necessary for our support, and conducing so much to your comfort.

IV. *Uses.*

1. Of information and instruction.

(1.) If incomprehensible and infinite power belongs to the nature of God, then Jesus Christ hath a divine nature, because the acts of power proper to God are ascribed to him. This perfection of omnipotence doth unquestionably pertain to the Deity, and is an incommunicable property, and the same with the essence of God; he therefore to whom this attribute is ascribed is essentially God.

This is challenged by Christ in conjunction with eternity: Rev. i. 8, 'I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty;' this the Lord Christ speaks of himself. He who was equal with God proclaims himself by the essential title of the Godhead, part of which he repeats again, ver. 11. And this is the person which 'walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;' the person that 'was dead and now lives,' ver. 17, 18, which cannot possibly be meant of the Father, the first person, who can never come under that denomination of having been dead. Being therefore adorned with the same title, he hath the same Deity; and though his omnipotence be only positively asserted, ver. 8, yet his eternity being asserted, ver. 11, 17, it inferreth his immense power; for he that is eternal, without limits of time, must needs be conceived powerful, without any dash of infirmity.

Again, when he is said to be 'a child born,' and 'a Son given,' in the same breath he is called 'the mighty God,' Isa. ix. 6. It is introduced as a ground of comfort to the church, to preserve their hopes in the accomplishment of the promises made to them before. They should not imagine him to have only the infirmity of man, though he was veiled in the appearance of a man; no, they should look through the disguise of his flesh to the might of his Godhead. The attribute of *mighty* is added to the title *God*, because the consideration of power is most capable to sustain the drooping church in such a condition, and to prop up her hopes; it is upon this account he saith of himself, that 'whatsoever things the Father doth, those also doth the Son likewise,' John v. 19. In creation of heaven, earth, sea, and the preservation of all creatures, the Son works with the same will, wisdom, virtue, power, as the Father works; not as two may concur in an action in a different manner, as an agent and an instrument, a carpenter and his tools; but in the same manner of operation, *ὁμοίως*, which we translate *likewise*, which doth not express so well the emphasis of the word. There is no diversity of action between us; what the Father doth, that I do by the same power, with the same easiness in every respect; there is the same creative, productive, conservative power in both of us; and that not in one work that is done *ad extra*, but in all, in whatsoever the Father doth. 'In the same manner;' not by a delegated, but natural and essential power, by one undivided operation and manner of working.

[1.] The creation, which is a work of omnipotence, is more than once ascribed to him. This he doth own himself; the creation of the earth, and of man upon it; the stretching out the heavens by his hands, and the forming of all the host of them by his command, Isa. xlv. 12. He is not only the Creator of Israel, the church, ver. 12, but of the whole world, and every creature on the face of the earth, and in the glories of the heavens; which is repeated also, ver. 18, where, in this act of creation, he is called God himself, and speaks of himself in the term *Jehovah*; and swears by himself,

ver. 23. What doth he swear? 'That unto me every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear.' Is this Christ? Yes, if the apostle may be believed, who applies it to him, Rom. xiv. 11, to prove the appearance of all men before the judgment-seat of Christ, whom the prophet calls, ver. 15, a 'God that hides himself,' and so he was a hidden God when obscured in our fleshy infirmities. He was in conjunction with the Father when the sea received his decree, and the foundations of the earth were appointed, not as a spectator, but as an artificer, for so the word in Prov. viii. 30 signifies, as one brought up with him; it signifies also, 'a cunning workman,' Cant. vii. 1. He was the *east*, or the *sun*, from whence sprang all the light of life and being to the creature; so the word קֶדֶם, ver. 22, which is translated 'before his works of old,' is rendered by some, and signifies the *east* as well as *before*; but if it notes only his existence before, it is enough to prove his deity.

The Scripture doth not only allow him an existence before the world, but exalts him as the cause of the world. A thing may precede another, that is not the cause of that which follows; a precedency in age doth not entitle one brother or thing the cause of another; but our Saviour is not only ancients than the world, but is the Creator of the world: Heb. i. 10, 11, Who 'laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the works of his hands.' So great an elogy cannot be given to one destitute of omnipotence, since the distance between being and not being is so vast a gulf that cannot be surmounted and stepped over, but by an infinite power. He is 'the first and the last,' that 'called the generations from the beginning,' Isa. xli. 4, and had an almighty voice to call them out of nothing; in which regard he is called 'the everlasting Father,' Isa. ix. 6, as being the efficient of creation; as God is called the Father of the rain, or as father is taken for the inventor of an art; as Jubal, the first framer and inventor of music, is called 'the father of such as handle the harp,' Gen. iv. 21. And that person is said to 'make the sea, and form the dry land by his hands,' Ps. xcv. 5, 6, against whom we are exhorted not to 'harden our hearts,' ver. 8, which is applied to Christ by his apostle, Heb. iii. 8; in the 15th verse he is called 'a great king, and 'a great God, our maker.' The places wherein the creation is attributed to Christ, those that are the antagonists of his deity would evade by understanding them of the new or evangelical, not of the first, old, and material creation; but what appearance is there for such a sense? Consider,

First, That of Heb. i. 10, 11. It is spoken of that earth and heavens which were in the beginning of time; it is that earth that shall perish, that heaven that shall be folded up, that creation that shall grow old towards a decay; that is, only the visible and material creation. The spiritual shall endure for ever; it grows not old to decay, but grows up to a perfection; it sprouts up to its happiness, not to its detriment. The same person creates that shall destroy, and the same world is created by him that shall be destroyed by him, as well as it subsisted by virtue of his omnipotency.

Secondly, Can that also, Heb. i. 2, 'By whom also he made the worlds,' speaking of Christ, bear the same plea? It was the same person by whom 'God spake to us in these last times,' the same person which he hath 'constituted heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.' And the particle *also* intimates it to be a distinct act from his speaking or prophetic office, whereby he restored and new created the world, as well as the right foundation God had to make him heir of all things. It refers, likewise, not to the time of Christ's speaking upon earth, but to something past, and something different from the publication of the gospel; it is not *doth make*,

which had been more likely if the apostle had meant only the new creation, but *hath made*, *ἐποίησεν*, referring to time long since past, something done before his appearance upon earth as a prophet. 'By whom also he made the worlds,' or 'ages,' all things subjected to or measured by time, which must be meant, according to the Jewish phrase, of this material visible world; so they entitled God in their liturgy, the 'Lord of ages,' that is, the Lord of the world, and all ages and revolutions of the world, from the creation to the last period of time. If anything were in being before this frame of heaven and earth, and within the compass of time, it received being and duration from the Son of God. The apostle would give an argument to prove the equity of making him heir of all things as mediator, because he was the framer of all things as God. He may well be the heir or Lord of angels as well as men, who created angels as well as men. All things were justly under his power as mediator, since they derived their existence from him as creator. But,

Thirdly, What evasion can there be for that Col. i. 16, 'By him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him and for him'? He is said to be the creator of material and visible things, as well as spiritual and invisible; of things in heaven, which needed no restoration, as well as things on earth, which were polluted by sin, and stood in need of a new creation. How could the angels belong to the new creation, who had never put off the honour and purity of the first? Since they never divested themselves of their original integrity, they could not be re-invested with that which they never lost. Besides, suppose the holy angels be one way or other reduced as parts of the new creation, as being under the mediatory government of our Saviour, as their head, and in regard of their confirmation by him in that happy state, in what manner shall the devils be ranked among new creatures? They are called principalities and powers as well as the angels, and may come under the title of things invisible. That they are called principalities and powers is plain: Eph. vi. 12, 'For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.' Good angels are not there meant, for what war have believers with them, or they with believers? They are the guardians of them, since Christ hath taken away the enmity between our Lord and theirs, in whose quarrel they were engaged against us. And since the apostle, speaking of all things created by him, expresseth it so, that it cannot be conceived he should except anything, how come the finally impenitent and unbelievers, which are things in earth, and visible, to be listed here in the roll of new creatures? None of these can be called new creatures, because they are subjected to the government of Christ, no more than the earth and sea, and the animals in it, are made new creatures, because they are all under the dominion of Christ and his providential government. Again, the apostle manifestly makes the creation he here speaks of to be the material, and not the new creation; for that he speaks of afterwards as a distinct act of our Lord Jesus under the title of 'reconciliation,' Col. i. 20, 21, which was the restoration of the world, and the satisfying for that curse that lay upon it. His intent is here to shew, that not an angel in heaven, nor a creature upon earth, but was placed in their several degrees of excellency by the power of the Son of God, who, after that act of creation and the entrance of sin, was the reconciler of the world through the blood of his cross.

Fourthly, There is another place as clear: John i. 3, 'All things were made by him, and without him was nothing made that was made.' The

creation is here ascribed to him : affirmatively, 'All things were made by him ;' negatively, 'There was nothing made without him ;' and the words are emphatical, οὐδὲ ἓν, *not one thing*, excepting nothing, including invisible things, as well as things conspicuous to sense only, mentioned in the story of the creation, Gen. i. ; not only the entire mass, but the distinct parcels, the smallest worm and the highest angel, owe their original to him. And if not one thing, then the matter was not created to his hands ; and his work consisted not only in the forming things from that matter. If that one thing of matter were excepted, a chief thing were excepted ; if not one thing were excepted, then he created something of nothing, because spirits, as angels and souls, are not made of any pre-existing or fore-created matter. How could the evangelist phrase it more extensively and comprehensively ? This is a character of omnipotency ; to create the world, and everything in it, of nothing, requires an infinite virtue and power. If all things were created by him, they were not created by him as man, because himself, as man, was not in being before the creation ; if all things were made by him, then himself was not made, himself was not created ; and to be existent without being made, without being created, is to be unboundedly omnipotent. And if we understand it of the new creation, as they do that will not allow him an existence in his deity before his humanity, it cannot be true of that ; for how could he regenerate Abraham, make Simeon and Anna new creatures, who 'waited for the salvation of Israel,' and form John Baptist, and fill him with the Holy Ghost, even from the womb, Luke i. 15 (who belonged to the new creation, and was to prepare the way) if Christ had not a being before him ? The evangelist alludes to, and explains the history of, the creation in the beginning, and acquaints us what was meant by *God said*, so often, viz., the eternal Word, and describes him in his creative power, manifested in the framing the world, before he describes him in his incarnation, when he came to lay the foundation of the restoration of the world : John i. 14, 'The Word was made flesh ;' this Word who was with God, who was God, who made all things, and gave being to the most glorious angels and the meanest creature without exception, this Word, in time, was made flesh.

Fifthly, The creation of things mentioned in these Scriptures cannot be attributed to him as an instrument. As if when it is said, God created all things by him, and by him made the worlds, we were to understand the Father to be the agent, and the Son to be a tool in his Father's hand, as an axe in the hand of a carpenter, or a file in the hand of a smith, or a servant acting by command as the organ of his master. The preposition *per*, or διὰ, doth not alway signify an instrumental cause. When it is said, that the apostle gave the Thessalonians a command 'by Jesus Christ,' 1 Thes. iv. 2, was Christ the instrument, and not the Lord of that command the apostle gave ? The immediate operation of Christ dwelling in the apostles, was that whereby they gave the commands to their disciples. When we are called by God, 1 Cor. i. 9, is he the instrumental or principal cause of our effectual vocation ? And can the will of God be the instrument of putting Paul into the apostleship, or the sovereign cause of investing him with that dignity, when he calls himself an apostle 'by the will of God' ? Eph. i. 3. And when all things are said to be *through* God, as well as *of* him, must he be counted the instrumental cause of his own creation, counsels, and judgments ? Rom. xi. 36. When we 'mortify the deeds of the body through the Spirit,' Rom. viii. 13, or keep the 'treasure of the word by the Holy Ghost,' 2 Tim. i. 14, is the Holy Ghost of no more dignity in such acts than instrument ? Nor doth the gaining a thing by a person make him a mere

instrument or inferior ; as when a man gains his right in the way of justice against his adversary by the magistrate, is the judge inferior to the suppliant ? If the Word were an instrument in creation, it must be a created or uncreated instrument ; if created, it could not be true what the evangelist saith, that ' all things were made by him,' since himself, the principal thing, could not be made by himself ; if uncreated, he was God, and so acted by a divine omnipotency, which surmounts an instrumental cause. But indeed, an instrument is impossible in creation, since it is wrought only by an act of the divine will. Do we need any organ to an act of volition ? The efficacious will of the Creator is the cause of the original of the body of the world, with its particular members and exact harmony ; it was formed by a word and established by a command, Ps. xxxiii. 9 ; the beauty of the creation stood up at the precept of his will. Nor was the Son a partial cause ; as when many are said to build a house, one works one part, and another frames another part. God created all things by the immediate operation of the Son, in the unity of essence, goodness, power, wisdom ; not an extrinsic, but a connatural instrument. As the sun doth illustrate all things by his light, and quickens all things by his heat, so God created the worlds by Christ, as he was the brightness or splendour of his glory, the exact image of his person, which follows the declaration of his making the worlds by him, Heb. i. 3, 4, to shew that he acted not as an instrument, but one in essential conjunction with him, as light and brightness with the sun. But suppose he did make the world as a kind of instrument, he was then before the world, not bounded by time, and eternity cannot well be conceived belonging to a being without omnipotency ; he is the end as well as the author of the creatures, Col. i. 16, not only the principle which gave them being, but the sea into whose glory they run and dissolve themselves, which consists not with the meanness of an instrument.

[2.] As creation, so preservation is ascribed to him : Col. i. 17, ' By him all things consist.' As he preceded all things in his eternity, so he establishes all things by his omnipotency, and fixes them in their several centres, that they sink not into that nothing from whence he fetched them. By him they flourish in their several beings, and observe the laws and orders he first appointed. That power of his which extracted them from insensible nothing, upholds them in their several beings with the same facility as he spake being into them, even ' by the word of his power,' Heb. i. 3, and by one creative continued voice called all generations from the beginning to the period of the world, Isa. xli. 4, and causes them to flourish in their several seasons. It is ' by him kings reign, and princes decree justice,' and all things are confined within the limits of government ; all which are acts of an infinite power.

[3.] Resurrection is also ascribed to him. The body crumbled to dust, and that dust blown to several quarters of the world, cannot be gathered in its distinct parts, and new formed for the entertainment of the soul, without the strength of an infinite arm. This he will do, and more ; change the vileness of an earthly body into the glory of an heavenly one ; a dusty flesh into a spiritual body, which is an argument of a power invincible, to which all things cannot but stoop ; for it is by such an operation, which testifies an ability to ' subdue all things to himself,' Phil. iii. 21, especially when he works it with the same ease as he did the creation, by the power of his voice : John v. 28, ' All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth : ' speaking them into a restored life from insensible dust, as he did into being from an empty nothing. The greatest acts of power are owned to belong to creation, preservation, resurrection. Omnipotence, therefore,

is his right ; and therefore a deity cannot be denied to him that inherits a perfection essential to none but God, and impossible to be entrusted in, or managed by, the hands of any creatures.

And this is no mean comfort to those that believe in him. He is, in regard of his power, 'the horn of salvation;' so Zacharias sings of him, Luke i. 69. Nor could there be any more mighty found out upon whom God could have laid our help, Ps. lxxxix. 19. No reason, therefore, to doubt his ability to save to the utmost, who hath the power of creation, preservation, and resurrection in his hands. His promises must be accomplished, since nothing can resist him. He hath power to fulfil his word, and bring all things to a final issue, because he is almighty; by his outstretched arm in the deliverance of his Israel from Egypt (for it was *his* arm, 1 Cor. x.), he shewed that he was able to deliver us from spiritual Egypt. The charge of mediator to expiate sin, vanquish hell, form a church, conduct and perfect it, are not to be effected by a person of less ability than infinite. Let this almightiness of his be the bottom, wherein to cast and fix the anchor of our hopes.

2. Information. Hence may be inferred the deity of the Holy Ghost. Works of omnipotency are ascribed to the Spirit of God. By the motion of the wings of this Spirit, as a bird over her eggs, was that rude and unshapen mass hatched into a comely world, Gen. i. 2: so the word *moved* properly signifies. The stars, or perhaps the angels, are meant by the 'garnishing of the heavens' in the verse before the text, were brought forth in their comeliness and dignity, as the ornaments of the upper world, by this Spirit; 'By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens.' To this Spirit Job ascribes the formation both of the body and soul under the title of Almighty: Job xxxiii. 4, 'The Spirit of God hath made, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life.' Resurrection, another work of omnipotency, is attributed to him, Rom. viii. 11. The conception of our Saviour in the womb; the miracles that he wrought, were by the power of the Spirit in him. Power is a title belonging to him, and sometimes both are put together, 1 Thes. i. 5, and other places; and that great power of changing the heart, and sanctifying a polluted nature, a work greater than creation, is frequently acknowledged in the Scripture to be the peculiar act of the Holy Ghost. The Father, Son, Spirit, are one principle in creation, resurrection, and all the works of omnipotence.

3. Inference from the doctrine. The blessedness of God is hence evidenced. If God be almighty, he can want nothing; all want speaks weakness. If he doth what he will, he cannot be miserable; all misery consists in those things which happen contrary to our will. There is nothing can hinder his happiness, because nothing can resist his power. Since he is omnipotent, nothing can hurt him, nothing can strip him of what he hath, of what he is.* If he can do whatsoever he will, he cannot want anything that he wills. He is as happy, as great, as glorious, as he will; for he hath a perfect liberty of will to will, and a perfect power to attain what he will: his will cannot be restrained, nor his power mated. It would be a defect in blessedness to will what he were not able to do. Sorrow is the result of a want of power, with a presence of will. If he could will anything which he could not effect, he would be miserable, and no longer God; he can do whatsoever he pleases, and therefore can want nothing that pleases him.† He cannot be happy, the original of whose happiness is not in himself: nothing can be infinitely happy that is limited and bounded.

4. Hence is a ground for the immutability of God. As he is incapable of

* Sabunde, tit. 39.

† Pont, part vi., med. 16, p. 531.

changing his resolves, because of his infinite wisdom, so he is incapable of being forced to any change, because of his infinite power. Being almighty, he can be no more changed from power to weakness, than being all-wise, he can be changed from wisdom to folly, or being omniscient, from knowledge to ignorance. He cannot be altered in his purposes because of his wisdom, nor in the manner and method of his actions because of his infinite strength. Men, indeed, when their designs are laid deepest, and their purposes stand firmest, yet are forced to stand still, or change the manner of the execution of their resolves, by reason of some outward accidents that obstruct them in their course; for having not wisdom to foresee future hindrances, they have not power to prevent them, or strength to remove them, when they unexpectedly interpose themselves between their desire and performance; but no created power has strength enough to be a bar against God. By the same act of his will that he resolves a thing, he can puff away any impediments that seem to rise up against him. He that wants no means to effect his purposes, cannot be checked by anything that riseth up to stand in his way. Heaven, earth, sea, the deepest places, are too weak to resist his will, Ps. cxxxv. 6. The purity of the angels will not, and the devil's malice cannot, frustrate his will; the one voluntarily obeys the beck of his hand, and the other are vanquished by the power of it. What can make him change his purposes, who (if he please) can dash the earth against the heavens in the twinkling of an eye, untying the world from its centre, clap the stars and elements together into one mass, and blow the whole creation of men and devils into nothing. Because he is almighty, therefore he is immutable.

5. Hence is inferred the providence of God, and his government of the world. His power as well as his wisdom gives him a right to govern. Nothing can equal him, therefore nothing can share the command with him; since all things are his works, it is fittest they should be under his order: he that frames a work is fittest to guide and govern it. God hath the most right to govern, because he hath knowledge to direct his power, and power to execute the results of his wisdom. He knows what is convenient to order, and hath strength to effect what he orders. As his power would be oppressive without goodness and wisdom; so his goodness and wisdom would be fruitless without power. An artificer that hath lost his hands may direct, but cannot make an engine; a pilot that hath lost his arms may advise the way of steerage, but cannot hold the helm; something is wanting in him to be a complete governor; but since both counsel and power are infinite in God, hence results an infinite right to govern, and an infinite fitness, because his will cannot be resisted, his power cannot be enfeebled or diminished; he can quicken and increase the strength of all means as he pleases. He can hold all things in the world together, and preserve them in those functions wherein he settled them, and conduct them to those ends for which he designed them.

Every artificer, the more excellent he is, and the more excellency of power appears in his work, is the more careful to maintain and cherish it. Those that deny providence do not only ravish from him the bowels of his goodness, but strip him of a main exercise of his power, and engender in men a suspicion of weariness and feebleness in him, as though his strength had been spent in making them, that none is left to guide them. They would make him headless in regard of his wisdom, and bowless in regard of his goodness, and armless in regard of his strength. If he did not, or were not able to preserve and provide for his creatures, his power in making them would be in a great part an invisible power; if he did not preserve

what he made, and govern what he preserves, it would be a kind of strange and rude power, to make and suffer it to be dashed in pieces at the pleasure of others. If the power of God should relinquish the world, the life of things would be extinguished, the fabric would be confounded and fall into a deplorable chaos. That which is composed of so many various pieces could not maintain its union, if there was not a secret virtue binding them together, and maintaining those varieties of links.

Well then, since God is not only so good that he cannot will anything but what is good, so wise that he cannot err or mistake, but also so able that he cannot be defeated or mated, he hath every way a full ability to govern the world, where those three are infinite. The right and fitness resulting from thence is unquestionable; and, indeed, to deny God this active part of his power, is to render him weak, foolish, cruel, or all.

6. Here is a ground for the worship of God. Wisdom and power are the grounds of the respect we give to men; they being both infinite in God, are the foundation of a solemn honour to be returned to him by his creatures. If a man make a curious engine, we honour him for his skill; if another vanquish a vigorous enemy, we admire him for his strength; and shall not the efficacy of God's power in creation, government, redemption, inflame us with a sense of the honour of his name and perfections! We admire those princes that have vast empires, numerous armies, that have a power to conquer their enemies, and preserve their own people in peace; how much more ground have we to pay a mighty reverence to God, who, without trouble and weariness, made and manages this vast empire of the world by a word and beck! What sensible thoughts have we of the noise of thunder, the power of the sun, the storms of the sea! These things, that have no understanding, have struck men with such a reverence that many have adored them as gods. What reverence and adoration doth this mighty power, joined with an infinite wisdom in God, demand at our hands!

All religion and worship stands especially upon two pillars, goodness and power in God; if either of these were defective, all religion would faint away. We can expect no entertainment with him without goodness, nor any benefit from him without power. This God prefaceth to the command to worship him, the benefit his goodness had conferred upon them, and the powerful manner of conveyance of it to them: 2 Kings xvii. 36, 'The Lord brought you up from the land of Egypt with great power and an outstretched arm; him shall you fear, and him shall you worship, and to him shall you do sacrifice.' Because this attribute is a main foundation of prayer, the Lord's prayer is concluded with a doxology of it, 'For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory.' As he is rich, possessing all blessings, so he is powerful to confer all blessings on us, and make them efficacious to us. The Jews repeat many times in their prayers, some say an hundred times,

מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, 'The king of the world;' it is both an awe and an encouragement.*

We could not without consideration of it pray in faith of success, nay, we could not pray at all, if his power were defective to help us, and his mercy too weak to relieve us. Who would solicit a lifeless, or lie a prostrate suppliant to a feeble arm! Upon this ability of God our Saviour built his petitions: Heb. v. 7, 'He offered up strong cries unto him that was able to save him from death.' Abraham's faith hung upon the same string, Rom. iv. 21, and the captive church supplicates God to act 'according to the greatness of his power,' Ps. lxxix. 11. In all our addresses, this is to be eyed and considered, God is able to help, to relieve, to

ease me, let my misery be never so great, and my strength never so weak. 'If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean,' was the consideration the leper had when he came to worship Christ, Mat. viii. 2; he was clear in his power, and therefore worshipped him, though he was not equally clear in his will. All worship is shot wrong that is not directed to, and conducted by, the thoughts of this attribute whose assistance we need. When we beg the pardon of our sins, we should eye mercy and power; when we beg his righting us in any case where we are unjustly oppressed, we do not eye righteousness without power; when we plead the performance of his promise, we do not regard his faithfulness only without the prop of his power. As power ushers in all the attributes of God in their exercise and manifestation in the world, so should it be the butt our eyes should be fixed upon in all our acts of worship; as without his power his other attributes would be useless, so without apprehensions of his power our prayers will be faithless and comfortless. The title in the Lord's prayer directs us to a prospect both of his goodness and power; his goodness in the word *Father*, his greatness, excellency, and power in the word *heaven*. The heedless consideration of the infiniteness of this perfection roots up piety in the midst of us, and makes us so careless in worship. Did we more think of that power that raised the world out of nothing, that orders all creatures by an act of his will, that performed so great an exploit as that of our redemption, when masterless sin had triumphed over the world, we should give God the honour and adoration which so great an excellency challengeth and deserves at our hands, though we ourselves had not been the work of his hands, or the monuments of his strength. How could any creature engross to itself that reverence from us which is due to the powerful Creator, of whom it comes infinitely short in strength as well as wisdom!

7. From this we have a ground for the belief of the resurrection. God aims at the glory of his power, as well as the glory of any other attribute. Moses else would not have culled out this as the main argument in his pleading with God for the sheathing the sword, which he began to draw out against them in the wilderness: Num. xiv. 16, 'The nations will say, Because the Lord was not able to bring these people into the land which he swore to them,' &c. As the finding out the particulars of the dust of our bodies discovers the vastness of his knowledge, so to raise them will manifest the glory of his power as much as creation. Bodies that have mouldered away into multitudes of atoms, been resolved into the elements, passed through varieties of changes, been sometimes the matter to lodge the form of a plant, or been turned into the substance of a fish or fowl, or vapoured up into a cloud, and been part of that matter which hath compacted a thunder-bolt; disposed of in places far distant, scattered by the winds, swallowed and concocted by beasts: for these to be called out from their different places of abode to meet in one body, and be restored to their former consistency in a marriage union, 'in the twinkling of an eye,' 1 Cor. xv. 52, it is a consideration that may justly amaze us, and our shallow understandings are too feeble to comprehend it. But is it not credible, since all the disputes against it may be silenced by reflections on infinite power, which nothing can oppose, for which nothing can be esteemed too difficult to effect, which doth not imply a contradiction in itself? It was no less amazing to the blessed virgin to hear a message that she should conceive a son without knowing a man; but she is quickly answered by the angel, with a *Nothing is impossible to God*, Luke i. 34, 37. The distinct parts of our bodies cannot be hid from his all-seeing eye, wherever they are lodged, and in all the changes they pass through, as was discovered when the omniscience of God

was handled ; shall, then, the collection of them together be too hard for his invincible power and strength, and the uniting all those parts into a body, with new dispositions to receive their several souls, be too big and bulky for that power which never yet was acquainted with any bar ? Was not the miracle of our Saviour's multiplying the loaves, suppose it had not been by a new creation, but a collection of grain from several parts, very near as stupendous as this ? Had any one of us been the only creature made just before the matter of the world, and beheld that inform chaos, covered with a thick darkness, mentioned Gen. i. 2, would not the report, that from this dark deep, next to nothing, should be raised such a multitude of comely creatures, with such innumerable varieties of members, voices, colours, motions, and such numbers of shining stars ; a bright sun, one uniform body of light from this darkness, that should, like a giant, rejoice to run a race for many thousand years together, without stop or weariness ; would not all these have seemed as incredible as the collection of scattered dust ? What was it that erected the innumerable host of heaven, the glorious angels, and glittering stars, for aught we know more numerous than the bodies of men, but an act of the divine will ? And shall the power that wrought this, sink under the charge of gathering some dispersed atoms, and compacting them into a human body ? Can you tell how the dust of the ground was kneaded by God into the body of man, and changed into flesh, skin, hair, bones, sinews, veins, arteries, and blood, and fitted for so many several activities, when a human soul was breathed into it ?* Can you imagine how a rib, taken from Adam's side, a lifeless bone, was formed into head, hands, feet, eyes ? Why may not the matter of men which have been be restored, as well as that which was not be first erected ? Is it harder to repair those things which were, than to create those things which were not ? Is there not the same artificer ? Hath any disease or sickness abated his power ? Is the Ancient of days grown feeble ? or shall the elements and other creatures, that alway yet obeyed his command, ruffle against his raising voice, and refuse to disgorge those remains of human bodies they have swallowed up in their several bowels ? Did the whole world, and all the parts of it, rise at his word ? and shall not some parts of the world, the dust of the dead, stand up out of the graves at the word of the same mighty efficacy ? Do we not annually see those marks of power which may stun our incredulity in this concern ? Do you see, in a small acorn or little seed, any such sights as a tree, with body, bark, branches, leaves, flowers, fruit ? Where can you find them ? Do you know the invisible corners where they lurk in that little body ? And yet these you afterwards view rising up from this little body, when sown in the ground, that you could not possibly have any prospect of when you rolled it in your hand, or opened its bowels. And why may not all the particulars of our bodies, however disposed as to their distinct natures invisibly to us, remain distinct, as well as if you mingle a thousand seeds together, they will come up in their distinct kinds, and preserve their distinct virtues ?

Again, is not the making heaven and earth, the union of the divine and human nature, eternity and infirmity, to make a virgin conceive a son, bear the Creator, and bring forth the Redeemer, to form the blood of God of the flesh of a virgin, a greater work than the calling together and uniting the scattered parts of our bodies, which are all of one nature and matter ? And since the power of God is manifested in pardoning innumerable sins, is not the scattering our transgressions, as far as the east is from the west, as the expression is, Ps. ciii. 12, and casting such numbers into the depths of the

* Lingend, to . iii. p. 779, 780.

sea, which is God's power over himself, a greater argument of might than the recalling and repairing the atoms of our bodies from their various receptacles? It is not hard for them to believe this of the resurrection, that have been sensible of the weight and force of their sins, and the power of God in pardoning and vanquishing that mighty resistance, which was made in their hearts against the power of his renewing and sanctifying grace. The consideration of the infinite power of God is a good ground of the belief of the resurrection.

8. Since the power of God is so great and incomprehensible, how strange is it that it should be contemned and abused by the creatures as it is! The power of God is beaten down by some, outraged by others, blasphemed by many under their sufferings. The stripping God of the honour of his creation, and the glory of his preservation of the world, falls under this charge. Thus do they that deny his framing the world alone, or thought the first matter was not of God's creation; and such as fancied an evil principle, the author of all evil, as God is the author of all good, and so exempt from the power of God that it could not be vanquished by him. These things have formerly found defenders in the world, but they are in themselves ridiculous and vain, and have no footing in common reason, and are not worthy of debate in a Christian auditory.

In general, all idolatry in the world did arise from the want of a due notion of this infinite power. The heathen thought one God was not sufficient for the managing of all things in the world, and therefore they feigned several gods that had several charges: as Ceres presided over the fruits of the earth; Esculapius over the cure of distempers; Mercury for merchandise and trade; Mars for war and battles; Apollo and Minerva for learning and ingenious arts; and Fortune for casual things. Whence doth the other sort of idolatry, the adoring our bags and gold, our dependencies on and trusting in creatures for help, arise, but from ignorance of God's power, or mean and slender apprehensions of it?

First, There is a contempt of it.

Secondly, An abuse of it.

(1.) It is contemned in every sin, especially in obstinacy in sin. All sin whatsoever is built upon some false notion or monstrous conception of one or other of God's perfections, and in particular of this. It includes a secret and lurking imagination, that we are able to grapple with omnipotence, and enter the lists with almightiness; what else can be judged of the apostle's expression, 1 Cor. x. 22, 'Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?' Do we think we have an arm too powerful for that justice we provoke, and can repel that vengeance we exasperate? Do we think we are an even match for God, and are able to despoil him of his divinity? To despise his will, violate his order, practise what he forbids with a severe threatening, and pawns his power to make it good, is to pretend to have an arm like God, and be able to thunder with a voice equal or superior to him, as the expression is, Job xl. 9. All security in sin is of this strain; when men are not concerned at divine threatenings, nor staggered in their sinful race, they intimate that the declarations of divine power are but vain-glorious boastings, that God is not so strong and able as he reports himself to be; and therefore they will venture it, and dare him to try whether the strength of his arm be as forcible as the words of his mouth are terrible in his threats. This is to believe themselves creators, not creatures. We magnify God's power in our wants, and debase it in our rebellions, as though omnipotence were only able to supply our necessities, and unable to revenge the injuries we offer him.

(2.) This power is contemned in distrust of God. All distrust is founded in a doubting of his truth, as if he would not be as good as his word; or of his omniscience, as if he had not a memory to retain his word; or, of his power, as if he could not be as great as his word. We measure the infinite power of God by the short line of our understandings, as if infinite strength were bounded within the narrow compass of our finite reason, as if he could do no more than we were able to do.

How soon did those Israelites lose the remembrance of God's outstretched arm, when they uttered that atheistical speech, Ps. lxxviii. 19, 'Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?' As if he that turned the dust of Egypt into lice for the punishment of their oppressors, could not turn the dust of the wilderness into corn for the support of their bodies! As if he that had miraculously rebuked the Red Sea for their safety, could not provide bread for their nourishment! Though they had seen the Egyptians with lost lives in the morning, in the same place where their lives had been miraculously preserved in the evening, yet they disgrace that experimented power by opposing to it the stature of the Anakims, the strength of their cities, and the height of their walls, Numb. xiii. 32. And Numb. xiv. 3, 'Wherefore hath the Lord brought us into this land to fall by the sword?' as though the giants of Canaan were too strong for him, for whom they had seen the armies of Egypt too weak. How did they contract the almightiness of God into the littleness of a little man, as if he must needs sink under the sword of a Canaanite!

This distrust must arise either from a flat atheism, a denial of the being of God or his government of the world, or unworthy conceits of a weakness in him, that he had made creatures too hard for himself, that he were not strong enough to grapple with those mighty Anakims, and give them the possession of Canaan against so great a force. Distrust of him implies, either that he was always destitute of power, or that his power is exhausted by his former works, or that it is limited and near a period; it is to deny him to be the Creator that moulded heaven and earth. Why should we by distrust put a slight upon that power which he hath so often expressed, and which in the minutest works of his hands surmounts the force of the sharpest understanding?

(3.) It is contemned in too great a fear of man, which ariseth from a distrust of divine power. Fear of man is a crediting the might of man with a disrepute of the arm of God; it takes away the glory of his might, and renders the creature stronger than God, and God more feeble than mortal, as if the arm of man were a rod of iron, and the arm of God a brittle reed. How often do men tremble at the threatenings and hectorings of ruffians, yet will stand as stakes against the precepts and threatenings of God; as though he had less power to preserve us, than enemies had to destroy! With what disdain doth God speak to men infected with this humour! Isa. li. 12, 13, 'Who art thou, that art afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man, that shall be made as grass, and forgettest the Lord thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundation of the earth, and hast feared continually every day, because of the fury of the oppressor?'

To fear man that is as grass, that cannot think a thought without a divine concurrence, that cannot breathe but by a divine power, nor touch a hair without license first granted from heaven; this is a forgetfulness, and consequently a slight, of that infinite power which hath been manifested in founding the earth and garnishing the heavens. All fear of man in the way of our duty, doth in some sort thrust out the remembrance and discredit

the great actions of the Creator. Would not a mighty prince think it a disparagement to him if his servant should decline his command for fear of one of his subjects? And hath not the great God just cause to think himself disgraced by us, when we deny him obedience for fear of a creature, as though he had but an infant ability, too feeble to bear us out in duty, and incapable to balance the strength of an arm of flesh!

(4.) It is condemned by trusting in ourselves, in means, in man, more than in God. When in any distress we will try every creature-refuge before we have recourse to God, and when we apply ourselves to him, we do it with such slight and perfunctory frames, and with so much despondency, as if we despaired either of his ability or will to help us, and implore him with cooler affections than we solicit creatures; or, when in a disease we depend upon the virtue of the medicine, the ability of the physician, and reflect not upon that power that endued the medicine with that virtue, and supports the quality in it, and concurs to the operation of it; when we depend upon the activity of the means, as if they had power originally in themselves, and not derivatively, and do not eye the power of God animating and assisting them. We cannot expect relief from anything with a neglect of God, but we render it in our thoughts more powerful than God; we acknowledge a greater fulness in a shallow stream, than in an eternal spring; we do in effect depose the true God, and create to ourselves a new one; we assert by such a kind of acting the creature, if not superior, yet equal with God and independent on him. When we trust in our own strength without begging his assistance, or boast of our own strength without acknowledging his concurrence, as the Assyrian,—‘By the strength of my hand have I done this, I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man,’ Isa. x. 13,—it is as if ‘the axe should boast itself against him that hews therewith,’ and thinks itself more mighty than the arm that wields it, verse 15, when we trust in others more than in God. Thus God upbraids those by the prophet that sought help from Egypt, telling them, Isa. xxxi. 3, ‘The Egyptians were men, and not gods,’ intimating that, by their dependence on them, they rendered them gods and not men, and advanced them from the state of creatures to that of almighty deities. It is to set a pile of dust, a heap of ashes, above him that created and preserves the world. To trust in a creature, is to make it as infinite as God, to do that which is impossible in itself to be done. God himself cannot make a creature infinite, for that were to make him God.

It is also condemned when we ascribe what we receive to the power of instruments, and not to the power of God. Men, in whatsoever they do for us, are but the tools whereby the Creator works. Is it not a disgrace to the limner to admire his pencil and not himself; to the artificer to admire his file and engines, and not his power! It is ‘not I,’ saith Paul, that labour, ‘but the grace,’ the efficacious grace, ‘of God which is in me.’ Whatsoever good we do is from him, not from ourselves; to ascribe it to ourselves, or to instruments, is to overlook and condemn his power.

(5.) Unbelief of the gospel is a contempt and disowning divine power. This perfection hath been discovered in the conception of Christ, the union of the two natures, his resurrection from the grave, the restoration of the world, and the conversion of men, more than in the creation of the world; then what a disgrace is unbelief to all that power, that so severely punished the Jews for the rejecting the gospel, turned so many nations from their beloved superstitions, humbled the power of princes and the wisdom of philosophers, chased devils from their temples by the weakness of fishermen, planted the standard of the gospel against the common notions and inveterate customs of the world! What a disgrace is unbelief to this power, which

hath preserved Christianity from being extinguished by the force of men and devils, and kept it flourishing in the midst of sword, fire, and executioners; that hath made the simplicity of the gospel overpower the eloquence of orators, and multiplied it from the ashes of martyrs, when it was destitute of all human assistances! Not heartily to believe and embrace that doctrine which hath been attended with such marks of power, is a high reflection upon this divine perfection, so highly manifested in the first publication, propagation, and preservation of it.

The power of God is abused as well as contemned;

(1.) When we make use of it to justify contradictions. The doctrine of transubstantiation is an abuse of this power. When the maintainers of it cannot answer the absurdities alleged against it, they have recourse to the power of God. It implies a contradiction, that the same body should be on earth and in heaven at the same instant of time; that it should be at the right hand of God, and in the mouth and stomach of a man; that it should be a body of flesh, and yet bread to the eye and to the taste; that it should be visible and invisible, a glorious body, and yet gnawn by the teeth of a creature; that it should be multiplied in a thousand places, and yet an entire body in every one, where there is no member to be seen, no flesh to be tasted; that it should be above us in the highest heavens, and yet within us in our lower bowels. Such contradictions as these are an abuse of the power of God.

Again, we abuse this power, when we believe every idle story that is reported, because God is able to make it so if he pleased. We may as well believe Æsop's fables to be true, that birds spake and beasts reasoned, because the power of God can enable such creatures to such acts. God's power is not the rule of our belief of a thing, without the exercise of it in matter of fact, and the declaration of it upon sufficient evidence.

(2.) The power of God is abused, by presuming on it, without using the means he hath appointed. When men sit with folded arms, and make a confidence in his power a glorious title to their idleness and disobedience, they would have his strength do all, and his precept should move them to do nothing; this is a trust of his power against his command, a pretended glorifying his power with a slight of his sovereignty. Though God be almighty, yet for the most part he exerciseth his might in giving life and success to second causes and lawful endeavours. When we stay in the mouth of danger, without any call ordering us to continue, and against a door of providence opened for our rescue, and sanctuary ourselves in the power of God without any promise, without any providence conducting us, this is not to glorify the divine might, but to neglect it, in neglecting the means which his power affords to us for our escape; to condemn it to our humours, to work miracles for us according to our wills, and against his own.* God could have sent a worm to be Herod's executioner, when he sought the life of our Saviour, or employed an angel from heaven to have tied his hands or stopped his breath, and not put Joseph upon a flight to Egypt with our Saviour; yet had it not been an abuse of the power of God, for Joseph to have neglected the precept, and slighted the means God gave him for the preserving his own life and that of the child's! Christ himself, when the Jews consulted to destroy him, presumed not upon the power of God to secure him, but used ordinary means for his preservation, by walking no more openly, but retiring himself into a city near the wilderness till the hour was come, and the call of his Father manifest, John xi. 53, 54. A rash^a running upon danger, though for the truth itself, is a presuming upon, and

* Harwood, p 13.

consequently an abuse of, this power; a proud challenging it to serve our turns against the authority of his will, and the force of his precept; a not resting in his ordinate power, but demanding his absolute power to pleasure our follies and presumption, concluding and expecting more from it than what is authorised by his will.

9. Instruction. If infinite power be a peculiar property of God, how miserable will all wicked rebels be under this power of God! Men may break his laws, but not impair his arm; they may slight his word, but cannot resist his power. If he swear that he will sweep a place with the besom of destruction, 'As he hath thought, so shall it come to pass; and as he hath purposed, so shall it stand,' Isa. xiv. 23, 24. Rebels against an earthly prince may exceed him in strength, and be more powerful than their sovereign. None can equal God, much less exceed him. As none can exercise an act of hostility against him without his permissive will, so none can struggle from under his hand without his positive will. He hath an arm not to be moved, a hand not to be wrung aside. God is represented on his throne like a jasper stone, Rev. iv. 3, as one of invincible power when he comes to judge. The jasper is a stone which withstands the greatest force.* Though men resist the order of his laws, they cannot resist the sentence of their punishment, nor the execution of it. None can any more exempt themselves from the arm of his strength, than they can from the authority of his dominion. As they must bow to his sovereignty; so they must sink under his force. A prisoner in this world may make his escape; but a prisoner in the world to come cannot: Job. x. 7, 'There is none that can deliver out of thine hand.' There is 'none to deliver when he tears in pieces,' Ps. l. 22. His strength is uncontrollable; hence his throne is represented as a fiery flame, Dan. vii. 9. As a spark of fire hath power to kindle one thing after another, and increase till it consumes a forest, a city, swallow up all combustible matter, till it consumes a world, and many worlds, if they were in being. What power hath a tree to resist the fire, though it seems mighty when it out-braves the winds? What man to this day hath been able to free himself from that chain of death God clapped upon him for his revolt? And if he be too feeble to rescue himself from a temporal, much less from an eternal death. The devils have to this minute groaned under the pile of wrath, without any success in delivering themselves by all their strength, which much surmounts all the strength of mankind, nor have they any hopes to work their rescue to eternity.

How foolish is every sinner! Can we poor worms strut it out against infinite power? We cannot resist the meanest creatures when God commissions them, and puts a sword into their hands. They will not, no, not the worms, be startled at the glory of a king, when they have their Creator's warrant to be his executioners, Acts xii. 23. Who can withstand him, when he commands the waves and inundations of the sea to leap over the shore; when he divides the ground in earthquakes, and makes it gape wide to swallow the inhabitants of it; when the air is corrupted to breed pestilences; when storms and showers, unseasonably falling, putrefy the fruits of the earth? What created power can mend the matter, and with a prevailing voice say to him, What dost thou?

There are two attributes God will make glisten in hell to the full, his wrath and his power: Rom. ix. 22, 'What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction?' If it were mere wrath, and no power to second it, it were not so terrible; but it is wrath and power, both are joined

* Grot. *in loc.*

together; it is not only a sharp sword, but a powerful arm; and not only that, for then it were well for the damned creature. To have many sharp blows, and from a strong arm, this may be without putting forth the highest strength a man hath; but in this God makes it his design to make his power known and conspicuous. He takes the sword (as it were) in both hands, that he may shew the strength of his arm in striking the harder blow; and therefore the apostle calls it, 2 Thes. i. 9, 'the glory of his power,' which puts a sting into this wrath; and it is called, Rev. xix. 15, 'the fierceness of the wrath of the Almighty.' God will do it in such a manner, as to make men sensible of his almightiness in every stroke. How great must that vengeance be, that is backed by all the strength of God? When there will be a powerful wrath without a powerful compassion, when all this power shall be exercised in punishing, and not the least mite of it exercised in pitying, how irresistible will be the load of such a weighty hand! How can the dust of the balance break the mighty bars, or get out of the lists of a powerful vengeance, or hope for any grain of comfort! Oh that every obstinate sinner would think of this, and consider his unmeasurable boldness in thinking himself able to grapple with omnipotence! What force can any have to resist the presence of him before whom rocks melt, and the heavens at length shall be shrivelled up as a parchment by the last fire! As the light of God's face is too dazzling to be beheld by us, so the arm of his power is too mighty to be opposed by us. His almightiness is above the reach of our potsherd strength, as his infiniteness is above the capacity of our purblind understandings. God were not omnipotent, if his power could be rendered ineffectual by any.

Use 2. A second use of this point, from the consideration of the infinite power of God, is of comfort. As omnipotence is an ocean that cannot be fathomed, so the comforts from it are streams that cannot be exhausted. What joy can be wanting to him that finds himself folded in the arms of omnipotence!

This perfection is made over to believers in the covenant, as well as any other attribute: 'I am the Lord your God;' therefore, that power, which is as essential to the Godhead as any other perfection of his nature, is in the rights and extent of it assured unto you. Nay, we may not say, it is made over more than any other, because it is that which animates every other perfection, and is the spirit that gives them motion and appearance in the world. If God had expressed himself in particular, as, I am a true God, a wise God, a loving God, a righteous God, I am yours, what would all or any of those have signified, unless the other also had been implied, as, I am almighty God, I am your God! In God's making over himself in any particular attribute, this of his power is included in every one, without which all his other grants would be insignificant. It is a comfort that power is in the hand of God; it can never be better placed, for he can never use his power to injure his confiding creature. If it were in our own hands, we might use it to injure ourselves. It is a power in the hand of an indulgent father, not a hard-hearted tyrant; it is a just power. 'His right hand is full of righteousness,' Ps. xlviii. 10; because of his righteousness he can never use it ill, and because of his wisdom he can never use it unseasonably. Men that have strength often misplace the actings of it, because of their folly, and sometimes employ it to base ends, because of their wickedness. But this power in God is alway awakened by goodness and conducted by wisdom; it is never exercised by self-will and passion, but according to the immutable rule of his own nature, which is righteousness. How comfortable is it to think that you have a God that can do what he pleases; nothing so

difficult but he can effect, nothing so strong but he can over-rule ! You need not dread men, since you have one to restrain them ; nor fear devils, since you have one to chain them. No creature but is acted by this power ; no creature but must fall upon the withdrawing of this power. It was not all laid out in creation ; it is not weakened by his preservation of things ; he yet hath a fulness of power, and a residue of Spirit. For whom should that eternal arm of the Lord be displayed, and that incomprehensible thunder of his power be shot out, but for those for whose sake and for whose comfort it is revealed in his word ?

In particular,

1. Here is comfort in all afflictions and distresses. Our evils can never be so great to oppress us as his power is great to deliver us. The same power that brought a world out of chaos, and constituted and hath hitherto preserved the regular motion of the stars, can bring order out of our confusions, and light out of our darkness. When our Saviour was in the greatest distress, and beheld the face of his Father frowning, while he was upon the cross, in his complaint to him he exerciseth faith upon his power : Mat. xxvii. 46, 'Eli, Eli ; My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?' that is, 'My strong, my strong.' *Eli* is a name of power belonging to God ; he comforts himself in his power, while he complains of his frowns. Follow his pattern, and forget not that power that can scatter the clouds, as well as gather them together. The psalmist's support in his distress was in the creative power of God : Ps. cxxi. 2, 'My help comes from the Lord which made heaven and earth.'

2. It is comfort in all strong and stirring corruptions and mighty temptations. It is by this we may arm ourselves, and be 'strong in the power of his might,' Eph. vi. 10. By this we may conquer principalities and powers as dreadful as hell, but not so mighty as heaven ; by this we may triumph over lusts within, too strong for an arm of flesh ; by this the devils that have possessed us may be cast out, the battered walls of our souls may be repaired, and the sons of Anak laid flat. That power that brought light out of darkness, and over-mastered the deformity of the chaos, and set bounds to the ocean, and dried up the Red Sea by a rebuke, can quell the tumults in our spirits, and level spiritual Goliaths by his word. When the disciples heard that terrifying speech of our Saviour concerning rich men, that it was 'easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God,' Mat. xix. 24, to entertain the gospel, which commanded self-denial ; and that, because of the allurements of the world, and the strong habits in their soul, Christ refers them to the power of God, ver. 26, who could expel those ill habits and plant good ones : 'With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.' There is no resistance but he can surmount, no stronghold but he can demolish, no tower but he can level.

3. It is comfort from hence that all promises shall be performed. Goodness is sufficient to make a promise, but power is necessary to perform a promise. Men that are honest cannot often make good their words, because something may intervene that may shorten their ability, but nothing can disable God without diminishing his Godhead. He hath an infiniteness of power to accomplish his word, as well as an infiniteness of goodness to make and utter his word. That might whereby he 'made heaven and earth,' and his 'keeping truth for ever,' are joined together, Ps. cxlvi. 5, 6 ; his Father's faithfulness and his creative power are linked together. It is upon this basis the covenant, and every part of it, is established, and stands as firm as the almightiness of God, whereby he sprung up the earth and reared the

heavens: 'No power can resist his will,' Rom. ix. 19; 'Who can disannul his purpose, and turn back his hand when it is stretched out?' Isa. xiv. 27. His word is unalterable, and his power is invincible. He could not deceive himself, for he knew his own strength when he promised; no unexpected event can change his resolution, because nothing can happen without the compass of his foresight. No created strength can stop him in his action, because all creatures are ready to serve him at his command; not the devils in hell, nor all the wicked men on earth, since he hath strength to restrain them, and an arm to punish them. What can be too hard for him that created heaven and earth? Hence it was that when God promised anything anciently to his people, he used often the name of the 'Almighty,' the 'Lord that created heaven and earth,' as that which was an undeniable answer to any objection against anything that might be made against the greatness and stupendousness of any promise. By that name in all his works of grace was he known to them, Exod. vi. 3. When we are sure of his will, we need not question his strength, since he never over-engageth himself above his ability. He that could not be resisted by *nothing* in creation, nor vanquished by devils in redemption, can never want power to glorify his faithfulness in his accomplishment of whatsoever he hath promised.

4. From this infiniteness of power in God, we have ground of assurance for perseverance. Since conversion is resembled to the works of creation and resurrection, two great marks of his strength, he doth not surely employ himself in the first work of changing the heart, to let any created strength baffle that power which he began and intends to glorify. It was this might that struck off the chain, and expelled that strong one that possessed you. What if you are too weak to keep him out of his lost possession, will God lose the glory of his first strength, by suffering his foiled adversary to make a re-entry, and regain his former usurpation? His outstretched arm will not do less by his spiritual than it did by his national Israel; it guarded them all the way to Canaan, and left them not to shift for themselves after he had struck off the fetters of Egypt, and buried their enemies in the Red Sea, Deut. i. 31. This greatness of the Father above all our Saviour makes the ground of believers' continuance for ever against the blasts of hell and engines of the world: John x. 29, 'My Father is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hands.' Our keeping is not in our own weak hands, but in the hands of him who is mighty to save. That power of God keeps us which intends our salvation. In all fears of falling away, shelter yourselves in the power of God: 'He shall be holden up,' saith the apostle, speaking concerning one weak in faith. And no other reason is rendered by him but this, 'for God is able to make him to stand,' Rom. xiv. 4.

From this attribute of the infinite power of God, we have a ground of comfort in the lowest estate of the church. Let the state of the church be never so deplorable, the condition never so desperate, that power that created the world, and shall raise the bodies of men, can create a happy state for the church, and raise her from an overwhelming grave. Though the enemies trample upon her, they cannot upon the arm that holds her, which by the least motion of it can lift her up above the heads of her adversaries, and make them feel the thunder of that power that none can understand. 'By the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of his nostrils they are consumed,' Job iv. 9; they shall be 'scattered as chaff before the wind.' If once he 'draw his hand out of his bosom,' all must fly before him, or sink under him, Ps. lxxiv. 11; and when there is none to help, his own arm sustains him, and brings salvation, and his fury doth uphold him, Isa. lxiii. 5.

What if the church totter under the underminings of hell ! What if it hath a sad heart and wet eyes ! In what a little moment can he make the night turn into day, and make the Jews that were preparing for death in Shushan triumph over the necks of their enemies, and march in one hour with swords in their hands, that expected the last hour ropes about their necks ! Esth. ix. 1, 5. If Israel be pursued by Pharaoh, the sea shall open its arms to protect them ; if they be thirsty, a rock shall spout out water to refresh them ; if they be hungry, heaven shall be their granary for manna ; if Jerusalem be besieged, and hath not force enough to encounter Sennacherib, an angel shall turn the camp into an Aceldama, a field of blood. His people shall not want deliverances, till God want a power of working miracles for their security. He is more jealous of his power than the church can be of her safety ; and if we should want other arguments to press him, we may implore him by virtue of his power ; for when there is nothing in the church as a motive to him to save it, there is enough in his own name, and the illustration of his power, Ps. cvi. 8. Who can grapple with the omnipotency of that God who is jealous of, and zealous for, the honour of it ? And therefore God, for the most part, takes such opportunities to deliver, wherein his almightiness may be most conspicuous, and his counsels most admirable. He awakened not himself to deliver Israel till they were upon the brink of the Red Sea ; nor to rescue the three children till they were in the fiery furnace ; nor Daniel till he was in the lion's den. It is in the weakness of his creature that his strength is perfected ; not in a way of addition of perfectness to it, but in a way of manifestation of the perfection of it ; as it is the perfection of the sun to shine and enlighten the world, not that the sun receives an increase of light by the darting of his beams, but discovers his glory to the admiration of men, and pleasure to the world. If it were not for such occasions, the world would not regard the mightiness of God, nor know what power were in him. It traverses the stage in its fulness and liveliness upon such occasions, when the enemies are strong, and their strength edged with an intense hatred, and but little time between the contrivance and execution. It is the great comfort that the lowest distresses of the church are a fit scene for the discovery of this attribute, and that the glory of God's omnipotence, and the church's security, are so straitly linked together. It is a promise that will never be forgotten by God, and ought never to be forgotten by us, that 'in this mountain, the hand of the Lord shall rest,' Isa. xxv. 10 ; that is, the power of the Lord shall abide ; 'and Moab shall be trodden under him, even as straw is trodden down for the dunghill.' And the plagues of Babylon 'shall come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine ; for strong is the Lord who judges her,' Rev. xviii. 8.

Use 3. The third use is for exhortation.

1. Meditate on this power of God, and press it often upon your minds. We conclude many things of God that we do not practically suck the comfort of, for want of deep thoughts of it, and frequent inspection into it. We believe God to be true, yet distrust him ; we acknowledge him powerful, yet fear the motion of every straw. Many truths, though assented to in our understandings, are kept under hatches by corrupt affections, and have not their due influence, because they are not brought forth into the open air of our souls by meditation. If we will but search our hearts, we shall find it is the power of God we often doubt of. When the heart of Ahaz and his subjects trembled at the combination of the Syrian and Israelitish kings against him, for want of a confidence in the power of God, God sends his prophet with commission to work a miraculous sign at his own choice, to rear up his fainting heart ; and when he refused to ask a sign out of diffi-

dence of that almighty power, the prophet complains of it as an affront to his master, Isa. vii. 12, 13. Moses, so great a friend of God, was overtaken with this kind of unbelief, after all the experiments of God's miraculous acts in Egypt; the answer God gives him manifests this to be at the core: 'Is the Lord's hand waxed short?' Num. xi. 23.

For want of actuated thoughts of this, we are many times turned from our known duty by the blast of a creature; as though man had more power to dismay us than God hath to support us in his commanded way. The belief of God's power is one of the first steps to all religion; without settled thoughts of it, we cannot pray lively and believingly, for the obtaining the mercies we want, or the averting the evils we fear; we should not love him, unless we are persuaded he hath a power to bless us; nor fear him, unless we are persuaded of his power to punish us. The frequent thoughts of this would render our faith more stable, and our hopes more stedfast; it would make us more feeble to sin, and more careful to obey. When the virgin staggered at the message of the angel, that she should bear a Son, he in his answer turns her to the creative power of God: Luke i. 35, 'The power of the Highest shall overshadow thee;' which seems to be an allusion to the Spirit's moving upon the face of the deep, and bringing a comely world out of a confused mass. Is it harder for God to make a virgin conceive a Son by the power of his Spirit, than to make a world? Why doth he reveal himself so often under the title of Almighty, and press it upon us, but that we should press it upon ourselves? And shall we be forgetful of that, which everything about us, everything within us, is a mark of? How come we by the power of seeing and hearing, a faculty and act of understanding and will, but by this power framing us, this power assisting us? What though the thunder of his power cannot be understood; no more can any other perfection of his nature; shall we therefore seldom think of it? The sea cannot be fathomed, yet the merchant excuseth not himself from sailing upon the surface of it. We cannot glorify God without due consideration of this attribute; for his power is his glory as much as any other, and called both by the name of 'glory,' Rom. vi. 4, speaking of Christ's resurrection by the glory of the Father; and also 'the riches of his glory,' Eph. iii. 16. Those that have strong temptations in their course, and over-pressing corruptions in their hearts, have need to think of it out of interest, since nothing but this can relieve them. Those that have experimented the working of it in their new creation, are obliged to think of it out of gratitude. It was this mighty power over himself that gave rise to all that pardoning grace already conferred, or hereafter expected; without it, our souls had been consumed, the world overturned: we could not have expected a happy heaven, but have lain yelling in an eternal hell, had not the power of his mercy exceeded that of his justice, and his infinite power executed what his infinite wisdom had contrived for our redemption. How much also should we be raised in our admirations of God, and ravish ourselves in contemplating that might that can raise innumerable worlds in those infinite imaginary spaces without this globe of heaven and earth, and exceed inconceivably what he hath done in the creation of this!

2. From the pressing the consideration of this upon ourselves, let us be induced to trust God upon the account of his power. The main end of the revelation of his power to the patriarchs, and of the miraculous operations of it in Egypt, was to induce them to an entire reposing themselves in God; and the psalmist doth scarce speak of the divine omnipotence without making this inference from it; and scarce exhorts to a trust in God, but backs it with a consideration of his power in creation, it being the chief support of

the soul: Ps. cxlvi. 5, 6, 'Happy is he whose hope is in the Lord his God, which made heaven and earth, the sea and all that therein is.' That power is invincible that drew the world out of nothing: nothing can happen to us harder than the making the world without the concurrence of instruments. No difficulty can nonplus that strength, that hath drawn all things out of nothing, or out of a confused matter next to nothing. No power can rifle what we commit to him, 2 Tim. i. 12. He is all power, above the reach of all power; all other powers in the world flowing from him, or depending on him. He is worthy to be trusted, since we know him true, without ever breaking his word, and omnipotent, never failing of his purpose; and a confidence in it is the chief act whereby we can glorify this power and credit his arm. A strong God, and a weak faith in omnipotence, do not suit well together; indeed, we are more engaged to a trust in divine power than the ancient patriarchs were. They had the verbal declaration of his power, and many of them little other evidence of it than in the creation of the world; and their faith in God being established in this first discovery of his omnipotence, drew out itself further to believe, that whatsoever God promised by his word, he was able to perform, as well as the creation of the world out of nothing, which seems to be the intendment of the apostle, Heb. xi. 3; not barely to speak of the creation of the world by God, which was a thing the Hebrews understood well enough from their ancient oracles, but to shew the foundation of the patriarchs' faith, viz., God making the world by his word, and what use they made of the discovery of his power in that, to lead them to believe the promise of God concerning the seed of the woman to be brought into the world; but we have not only the same foundation, but superadded demonstrations of this attribute in the conception of our Saviour, the union of the two natures, the glorious redemption, the propagation of the gospel, and the new creation of the world. They relied upon the naked power of God, without those more illustrious appearances of it, which have been in the ages since, and arrived to their notice. We have the wonderful effects of that which they had but obscure expectations of.

(1.) Consider, trust in God can never be without taking in God's power as a concurrent foundation with his truth. It is the main ground of trust, and so set forth in the prophet: Isa. xxvi. 4, 'Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.' And the faith of the ancients so recommended, Heb. xi., had this chiefly for its ground, and the faith in gospel times is called a 'trusting on his arm,' Isa. li. 5. All the attributes of God are the objects of our veneration, but they do not equally contribute to the producing trust in our hearts; his eternity, simplicity, infiniteness, ravish and astonish our minds when we consider them.* But there is no immediate tendency in their nature to allure us to a confidence in him, no, not in an innocent state, much less in a lapsed and revolted condition. But the other perfections of his nature, as his holiness, righteousness, mercy, are amiable to us in regard of the immediate operations of them upon and about the creature, and so having something in their own nature to allure us to repose ourselves in him; but yet those cannot engage to an entire trust in him, without reflecting upon his ability, which can only render those useful and successful to the creature. For whatsoever bars stand in the way of his holy, righteous, and merciful proceedings towards his creatures are not overmastered by those perfections, but by that strength of his which can only relieve us in concurrence with the other attributes. How could his mercy succour us without his arm, or his wisdom guide us without his hand, or his truth perform promises to us without his strength!

* Amyraut, Moral. tom. v. p. 170.

As no attribute can act without it, so in our addresses to him upon the account of any particular perfection in the Godhead according to our indigency, one eye must be perpetually fixed upon this of his power, and our faith would be feeble and dispirited without eying this; without this, his holiness, which hates sin, would not be regarded, and his mercy, pitying a grieving sinner, would not be valued. As this power is the ground of a wicked man's fear, so it is the ground of a good man's trust. This was that which was the principal support of Abraham, not barely his promise, but his ability to make it good, Rom. iv. 21; and when he was commanded to sacrifice Isaac, the ability of God to raise him up again, Heb. xi. 19. All faith would droop, and be in the mire, without leaning upon this. All those attributes which we consider as moral in God would have no influence upon us without this, which we consider physical in God. Though we value the kindness men may express to us in our distresses, yet we make them not the objects of our confidence, unless they have an ability to act what they express. There can be no trust in God without an eye to his power.

(2.) Sometimes the power of God is the sole object of trust. As when we have no promise to assure us of his will, we have nothing else to pitch upon but his ability; and that not his absolute power, but his ordinate, in the way of his providence. We must not trust in it so as to expect he should please our humour with fresh miracles, but rest upon his power, and leave the manner to his will. Asa, when ready to conflict with the vast Ethiopian army, pleaded nothing else but this power of God, 2 Chron. xiv. 11. And the three children, who had no particular promise of deliverance (that we read of), stuck to God's ability to preserve them against the king's threatening, and owned it in the face of the king, yet with some kind of inward intimations in their own spirits that he would also deliver them: Dan. iii. 17, 'Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace.' And accordingly the fire burned the cords that tied them, without singeing anything else about them. But when this power had been exercised upon like occasions, it is a precedent he hath given us to rest upon. Precedents in law are good pleas, and strong encouragements to the client to expect success in his suit. 'Our fathers trusted in thee, and thou didst deliver them,' saith David, Ps. xxii. 4. And Jehoshaphat in a case of distress, 2 Chron. xx. 7, 'Art not thou our God, that didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel?' When we have not any statute law and promise to plead, we may plead his power, together with the former precedents and acts of it. The centurion had nothing else to act his faith upon, but the power of Christ, and some evidences of it in the miracles reported of him; but he is silent in the latter, and casts himself only upon the former, acknowledging that Christ had the same command over diseases as himself had over his soldiers, Mat. viii. 10. And our Saviour, when he receives the petition of the blind men, requires no more of them in order to a cure, but a belief of his ability to perform it: Mat. ix. 28, 'Believe you that I am able to do this?' His will is not known but by revelation, but his power is apprehended by reason, as essentially and eternally linked with the notion of a God. God also is jealous of the honour of this attribute, and since it is so much virtually discredited, he is pleased when any do cordially own it, and entirely resign themselves to the assistance of it.

Well then, in all duties where faith is particularly to be acted, forget not this as the main prop of it. Do you pray for a flourishing and triumphing grace? Consider him as 'able to make all grace to abound in you,' 2 Cor. ix. 8. Do you want comfort and reviving under your contritions and godly

sorrow? Consider him as he declares himself, 'the high and lofty one,' Isa. lvii. 15. Are you under pressing distresses? Take Eliphaz his advice to Job, when he tells him what he himself would do if he were in his case: Job v. 8, 'I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause.' But observe under what consideration; ver. 9, as to one that 'doth great things and unsearchable, marvellous things without number.' When you beg of him the melting of your rocky hearts, the dashing in pieces your strong corruptions, the drawing his beautiful image in your soul, the quickening your dead hearts, and reviving your drooping spirits, and supplying your spiritual wants, consider him as one 'able to do abundantly,' not only 'above what you can ask,' but 'above what you can think,' Eph. iii. 20. Faith will be spiritless, and prayer will be lifeless, if power be not eyed by us in those things which cannot be done with an arm of omnipotence.

(3.) This doctrine teaches us humility and submission. The vast disproportion between the mightiness of God, and the meanness of a creature, inculcates the lesson of humility in his presence. How becoming is humility 'under a mighty hand'! 1 Peter v. 6. What is an infant in a giant's hand, or a lamb in a lion's paw? Submission to irresistible power is the best policy, and the best security; this gratifies and draws out goodness, whereas murmuring and resistance exasperates and sharpens power. We sanctify his name, and glorify his strength by falling down before it; it is an acknowledgment of his invisible strength, and our inability to match it. How low should we therefore lie before him, against whose power our pride and murmuring can do no good, who can outwrestle us in our contests, and alway 'overcome when he judges'! Rom iii. 4.

(4.) This doctrine teacheth us not to fear the pride and force of man. How unreasonable is it to fear a limited above an unbounded power! How unbecoming is the fear of man in him, who hath an interest in a strength able to curb the strongest devils! Who would tremble at the threats of a dwarf, that hath a mighty and watchful giant for his guard? If God doth but arise, 'his enemies are scattered,' Ps. lxviii. 1, the least motion makes them fly before him; it is no difficult thing for him, that made them by a word, to unmake their designs, and shiver them in pieces by the breath of his mouth. 'He brings princes to nothing, and makes the judges of the earth vanity;' they wither when he blows upon them, and 'their stock shall not take root in the earth.' He can command a 'whirlwind to take them away as stubble,' Isa. xl. 23, 24; yea, with the shaking of his hand he makes servants to become rulers of those that were their masters, Zech. ii. 9. Whole nations are no more in his hands than a morning cloud, or the dew upon the ground, or the chaff before the wind, or the smoke against the motion of the air, which though it appear out of a chimney like a black invincible cloud, is quickly dispersed, and becomes invisible, Hosea xiii. 3. How inconsiderable are the most mighty to this strength, which can puff away a whole world of proud grasshoppers, and a whole sky of daring clouds! He that by his word masters the rage of the sea, can overrule the pride and power of men. Where is the fury of the oppressor? It cannot overleap the bounds he hath set it, nor march an inch beyond the point he hath prescribed it. Fear not the confederacies of man, but 'sanctify the Lord of hosts, let him be your fear, and let him be your dread,' Isa. viii. 13. To fear men is to dishonour the name of God, and regard him as a feeble Lord, and not as the Lord of hosts, who is mighty in strength, so that they that harden themselves against him shall not prosper.

(5.) Therefore this doctrine teacheth us the fear of God. The prophet

Jeremiah counts it as an impossible thing for men to be destitute of the fear of God, when they seriously consider his name to be great and mighty. Jer. x. 6, 7, 'Thou art great, and thy name is great in might. Who would not fear thee, O thou King of nations?' Shall we not tremble at his presence, who hath 'placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree,' that though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet they 'cannot prevail,' Jer. v. 22. He can arm the weakest creature for our destruction, and disarm the strongest creatures which appear for our preservation. He can command a hair, a crumb, a kernel to go awry, and strangle us; he can make the heavens brass over our head, stop close the bottles of the clouds, and make the fruit of the fields droop, when there is a small distance to the harvest; he can arm men's wit, wealth, hands against themselves; he can turn our sweet morsels into bitter, and our own consciences into devouring lions; he can root up cities by moles, and conquer the proudest by lice and worms. The omnipotence of God is not only the object of a believer's trust, but a believer's fear. It is from the consideration of this power only that our Saviour presses his disciples, whom he entitles his friends, to fear God; which lesson he presses by a double repetition, and with a kind of asseveration, without rendering any other reason than this of the ability of God to cast into hell, Luke xii. 5. We are to fear him because he can, but bless his goodness because he will not. In regard of his omnipotence, he is to be revered, not only by mortal men, but by the blessed angels, who are past the fear of any danger by his power, being confirmed in a happy state by his unalterable grace. When they adore him for his holiness, they reverence him for his power with covered faces. The title of the Lord of hosts is joined in their reverential praise with that of his holiness: Isa. vi. 3, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.' How should we adore that power which can preserve us, when devils and men conspire to destroy us! How should we stand in awe of that power which can destroy us, though angels and men should combine to preserve us! The parts of his ways which are discovered are sufficient motives to an humble and reverential adoration. But who can fear and adore him according to the vastness of his power, and his excellent greatness, since 'the thunder of his power who can understand!'